

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF AN ISLAND COMMUNITY IN
WESTERN IRELAND: CLARE ISLAND, COUNTY MAYO.

by

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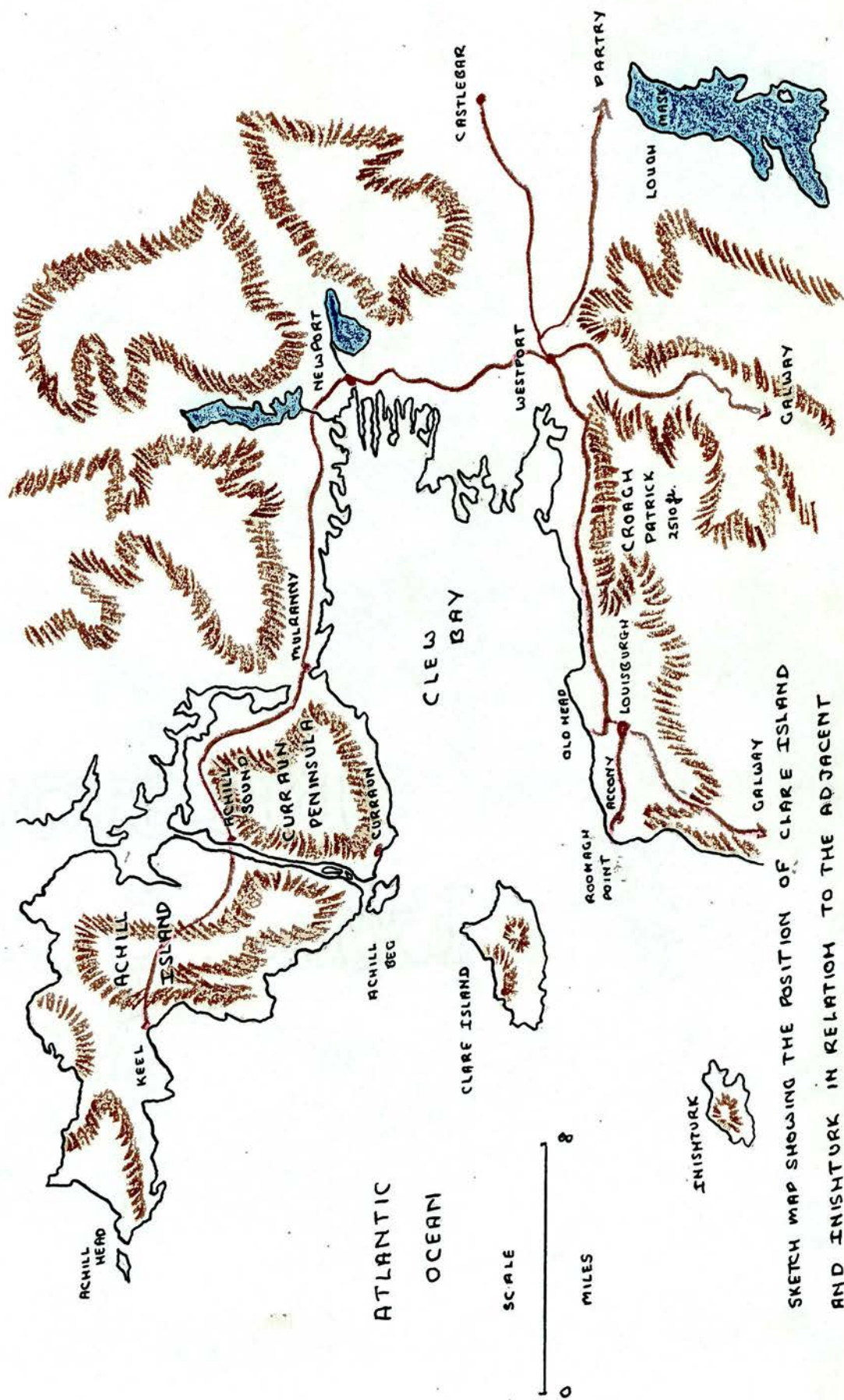
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PART ONE.

THE BACKGROUND TO ISLAND LIFE.



SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE POSITION OF CLARE ISLAND
AND INISHTURK IN RELATION TO THE ADJACENT
MAIN LAND, AND ACHILL ISLAND.

INTRODUCTION

Most anthropologists recognise that one of the primary objects of anthropology is to record the culture of primitive communities before these communities, in the face of competition from more technologically advanced societies, cease to exist, or become radically altered by the influence of these more technologically advanced societies. Such anthropological studies usually deal with non-literate tribal communities, at a low level of technological development, characterised by a subsistence economy, whose extinction is threatened by a society at a higher level of technological development, or whose numbers are dwindling rapidly because of scarcity of food supplies, disease, or such factors as oppression by more powerful societies.

In recent years it has become recognised that the anthropological methods used to study such communities can be used with equal advantage in studying all other types of communities at a somewhat higher level of technological and economic development, from the peasant community to the highly specialised economy of an industrial city. As Evans-Pritchard¹ remarks in his foreword to Pitt-Rivers', "People of the Sierra", a study of social relations in a Spanish village, "What constitutes an anthropological study is not where, or among what sort of people it is done, but what is being studied and how it is being studied. What is being studied is a complicated set of interpersonal relations, and the

1. J.A. Pitt-Rivers. The People of the Sierra. London, 1954.

method of study is to get to know well the persons involved and to see and hear what they do and say." "This sort of study," he adds, "is therefore limited by the nature of the method employed to fairly small communities."

While anthropologists are studying the effects on a primitive community, in competition for survival with a more advanced society, of the conflict, overt or covert, between the two societies, they should not ignore the conflict between the economically more advanced peasant societies and the highly industrialised economies which threaten to absorb them.

In the world of today there is little room left for peasant communities with a subsistence level of economy, where life tends to be a struggle for existence, and where there is very little economic surplus. Whereas the peasant community with a level of economy well above that of mere subsistence can co-exist with an industrial society, simply because it fulfils an important function in the economy of the industrial society, by producing enough agricultural commodities to support the needs of the industrial community - a situation where the two communities are mutually dependent on each other - this is not so with the peasant community at a subsistence level of economy. Here the peasant community cannot produce enough to be of any significance in the economy of the more industrialised community and at the same time the way of life tends to be hard and to have little to offer for those in the community. Such a community, with an under-developed rural economy, has to face constant competition from the industrial society which lures the youth from the country into the city, in search of a higher standard of living. In many rural areas

throughout the world today peasant cultures at a subsistence level of economy are fast-vanishing, because of the competition they are having to face from industrialised economies. Many of them that are still in existence today will inevitably be absorbed by the pull of industrialism, and its corollary, depopulation through emigration.

Probably one of the most striking instances of the rapid disappearance of such peasant cultures can be seen in Ireland today, and it is in Ireland that there is a great need for records to be made of these fast-disappearing cultures.

For several years now the dwindling population of Ireland has been a subject of considerable concern to the Irish Government. It has led to the publication of such books as "The Vanishing Irish,"¹ in which Sean O'Faolain compares the population of Ireland to "a scattering of chaste rabbits nibbling around the coast-line of Australia," and to various attempts on the part of the Government to re-capture the life and culture of the country, before emigration and famine depleted the population, when Irish was the universal language. They have attempted to do this by making the teaching of Irish compulsory in all schools in Ireland, encouraging cottage industries such as the making of lace and the knitting of fishermen's sweaters for export, by the exploitation of the turf bogs by "Bord Na Mona" the Irish Turf Board, to provide employment in rural areas and thus prevent emigration, and by the encouragement of industry in Irish speaking districts, the provision

1. J. O'Brien. The Vanishing Irish. London 1954.

of boats for fishing, the tuition in fishing methods to increase interest in the fishing industry.

Such attempts are not having any noticeable effect at present in checking the continual flow of emigrants to Great Britain and the United States, and the consequent rapid decline in population, especially on the western seaboard. Emigration has had a more serious effect on the western seaboard than on any other region in Ireland because the soil of the western counties is the most impoverished and most difficult from which to gain a living in the country, and there is a constant awareness among the people of the west of the accessibility of America. "America is the next stop," "America is the next parish", are phrases frequently heard in the west, and islanders on the west coast actually strain their eyes on a clear day in the hope of seeing its coasts, for they conceive it to be little farther away than any of the other neighbouring islands. The life of the people of the west is in general one of extreme hard labour, for very little financial gain, apart from that of ensuring survival. It is a constant struggle to exist with few rewards as compensation for doing so.

There is a gradual yet constant drift away from the extreme west of Ireland towards the more densely populated and industrialised central plain and east coast, and towards Great Britain and the United States. Some of the areas which have been most seriously affected by emigration are the islands of the west, which, because of their remoteness and inaccessibility, and their primitive living conditions have even less to offer to the permanent settler than the mainland.

The drift from these islands did not begin until the potato blight of 1845 caused the Great Famine, which led to the starvation and death of more than half the population of Ireland. Before the Great Famine the population of Ireland (excluding the northern counties of Ulster) was six and a half million, and since the famine years has declined steadily until it is now less than three million people. The islands, which until the advent of the potato blight had been over-crowded with numerous and thriving farming families, were some of the hardest-hit areas. There, as elsewhere, people were faced with the choice of emigrating or starving, because of the failure of the potato, their staple crop. Many of them died, and many emigrated, and this necessity to emigrate started the trend towards emigration which has continued ever since. Life on the western islands is hard. It is a continuous struggle against bad weather, shortage of good arable land, poverty and primitive living conditions. There is no employment for the young people, who are faced with the choice of remaining to work on the family farm, or emigrating. Since there is no possibility of earning a cash income on the islands most of the young islanders prefer to emigrate to Great Britain or the United States rather than struggle for existence on an island farm, especially when, with the increase in contact with the outside world through the introduction of the radio, and motor boats to facilitate communications with the mainland, they are becoming aware of standards of living higher than their own.

In general the islands of the west are facing the prospect of a very rapid extinction of their culture because this rapid

decline in population, due to emigration, means that those few people left cannot carry on the culture alone, and must either die out, move to the mainland, or emigrate too.

An example of how the culture of these islands can suddenly die out is afforded by the fate of the Blasket Islanders of County Kerry. Before the Great Famine the island supported a thriving population of several thousand people, and even as late as the 1930s there was a large village of several hundred people on the largest island, the Great Blasket. However in the last twenty years the population suffered such a rapid decline in numbers that in 1950 there were only twenty people left on the island, all old people, apart from one young married couple and their seven year old son. These survivors of the island culture were mostly too old and weak to be capable of rowing the four miles to the mainland in their canvas-covered "currachs" in rough weather to take a sick man to hospital or to fetch food supplies. Because of the obvious incapacity of the islanders to maintain their former way of life the Government offered to provide them all with new farms on the mainland, within sight of the island, if they would consent to leave it for good. They accepted this offer, and now the island is totally uninhabited except for the sheep which graze there and which the islanders row over to inspect on fine, calm days.

A similar fate has overtaken the island of Inishkea, which in 1891 had a population of 306 but which declined so much that a few years ago the last few remaining islanders, unable to carry on, with their numbers so depleted by emigration, went to live on

the mainland. The same situation is overtaking most of the western islands. Valentia Island in County Kerry, for instance, has a fast-dwindling population of about 1,000 people, and the whole island is pervaded with the atmosphere of decay. The majority of the people are old and unmarried, many of the fields lie uncultivated, deserted houses stand as their owner left them, net curtains still hanging in the windows and a padlock rusting away on the broken door, the owner unwilling to admit, by leaving the door unlocked, that he might not be coming back. A village of eleven houses, once a thriving fishing community, is now almost deserted, seven of the houses unoccupied and almost in ruins, and the remaining four occupied by old people too feeble to leave. The fish on which the villagers depended for their living, because of the poor quality of their land, suddenly left the waters surrounding the island and with their departure the people, say the remaining inhabitants of the village, had no alternative but to leave too.

The remaining island cultures of the west are not all in the same state of decline. Some of the islands, for instance Achill, where the people supplement the scanty income they gain from their small patches of land by shark fishing, cottage industries, migratory labour and by catering for the tourist trade, are still supporting flourishing populations and even showing an actual increase in population, instead of the usual decrease. Professor G. Duncan¹, discussing the population statistics of Ireland, terms

1. G.A. Duncan. Movement of the rural population in Southern Ireland 1911-36. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Vol. 48, 1943.

such areas which show a very small decrease in population, or perhaps even a slight increase, as "areas of resistance", as opposed to areas like Clare Island which show a steady decline in population, and which he terms "areas of denudation."

In general there is a marked tendency for the population of the islands of the west to continue to decrease steadily. In 1897 Charles Browne¹, making a comparative ethnographic study of the west coast islands and adjacent mainland areas for Trinity College, Dublin, notes that in all the islands he investigated (Clare, Inishbofin, Inishturk, Inishshark, Inishkea, Mweenish, Mason, the Aran Islands, Garumna and Lettermullen) the population was decreasing steadily because of emigration, and there has been no change in this tendency since then. These islands, "areas of denudation," can best be described as "dying" islands. They are characterised by a constant drift away from the island towards Great Britain or the United States, no sign of any increase of the population, or even of its numbers remaining static, by a high percentage of old people, the very rare occurrence of marriage, and correspondingly few young families, while those families which remain are slowly dying out, without any hope of replacement. On Clare Island, for instance, in 1821 it was reported that there were 67 families on the island with the surname O'Malley - there are now only 13 families of O'Malleys on the island, and only 61 families altogether.

The group of islands off the Galway-Mayo coast, Inishturk,

1. Charles Browne. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 3rd series, Vol. II, III, V, VI. 1891-1902.

Inishbofin and Inishclare (Clare Island), islands where the Irish language has now died out almost completely, are all at a stage when they can be regarded as in danger of becoming uninhabited in the next thirty or so years. On Inishturk, the island adjacent to Clare, a remote rock nine miles out in the Atlantic, eighteen families live without shop, public house, priest, doctor or telephone. Their only means of communication with the mainland is the island mail boat, once only a curragh without a motor, but in the last few years replaced by a larger boat with an inboard motor, which, weather permitting, collects the mail from the mainland once a week. The Mayo County Council are so concerned about the fate of these islanders that they have offered to transfer them to farms on the mainland, as they did with the Blasket Islanders, but the people adamantly refuse to accept this offer, clinging tenaciously to the island and refusing to admit its decline.

Of these three little known islands I decided that for the purpose of my investigations Clare Island would best fulfil my requirements as being representative of the "dying" islands of the west, because the county of Galway, to which Inishbofin belongs, is better known terrain than that of Mayo, and has been more frequently described than Mayo, which is still very much "terra incognita" not only to investigators from other parts of the world, but to the Irish themselves, who regard it as the wildest, most poverty stricken, "primitive" and least known of all the counties in Ireland. In 1801 McParlan¹, in his Statistical

1. James McParlan. Statistical Survey of County Mayo. Dublin, 1801.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE QUAY.



Opposite, four and a half miles away,
is Accony, the landing point on the
mainland for the island boats.

Survey of County Mayo writes, "Mayo being the remotest part of Ireland from intercourse with the interior of the kingdom, and the capital, I myself felt a considerable degree of pleasure in visiting it and of curiosity in observing the genius of the pure native, and the degree of advancement, in social manners, of the upper ranks as well as their improvement in other points, which it was the duty of my undertaking to unfold.....No particular degree of ferocity or grossness of ignorance identifies the natives, and the arts, sciences and culture of every kind seem diffused here amongst all ranks, as throughout the kingdom." These views might as well be those of the present day Irishman who is unfamiliar with Mayo.

My reason for choosing Clare as a subject of investigation instead of Inishturk, also in Mayo, was that the population of Inishturk was in my opinion too small, consisting only of 118 people, to make a useful study, whereas the Clare Island population of 223 people provides for a more adequate study of social relations in the island community.

During the last thirty years Clare Island has suffered a decline of 53% in her population. In 1926 the Census reports show that there were 479 people on the island, whereas in 1956 there were only 223 people left on the island, and investigations have shown that, of the 61 farms now occupied on the island, half this number will be deserted when the present owners, celibates or childless married couples, die.

Charles Browne, who spent a period of seven years carrying out ethnographical investigations on the coastal districts and islands of the western seaboard and whose work provides valuable

comparative material on the life of these areas fifty years ago, carried out his survey of Clare Island in 1897, just after it had been purchased by the Congested Districts Board, (see next Chapter) says of the island, "One of the principles observed in choosing a district for survey is, that localities in which any great change is likely to occur soon should be chosen in preference to those in which the condition of affairs is more settled." In the light of evidence afforded by population statistics, and of the general evidence of the decline of the island culture in the last thirty years, it is obvious that if this state of affairs continues the disappearance of the island culture in the near future will be inevitable, and consequently Clare Island can be regarded as being a community in which a great change is likely to occur soon.

Record of Births on Clare Island during the past hundred years,
taken from the Parish Registers, 1851-1957.

<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Total number of Births.</u>	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>
1858-1867	120	64	56
1868-1877	151	72	79
1878-1887	112	63	49
1888-1897	118	64	54
1898-1907	93	46	47
1908-1917	92	49	43
1918-1927	72	35	37
1928-1937	50	22	28
1938-1947	51	21	30
1948-1957	24	12	12
	<hr/> 883	<hr/> 448	<hr/> 435

These annual figures show a steady decline in the birth rate on the island - the rise in the period 1868-1877 being due, probably, to

recovery after the famine years of the 1850's.

In the last ten years there has been a decline of more than 50% in the birth rate, a result of the fact that marriage on the island is now a rare occurrence. (Illegitimacy on the island is virtually non-existent. During the period 1851-1957 there were 4 illegitimate births recorded for Inishturk, and only one for Clare Island, with a considerably larger population.)

Methodology.

In making a study of the social organization of a rural community the ethnographer is primarily concerned with investigating the system of social relations operative between the individuals who make up the community. I use Firth's¹ definition of community, as "a body of people sharing in common activities and bound by multiple relations in such a way that the aims of any individual can be achieved only by participation in action with others."

In a small community such as that chosen for study, with a subsistence economy, a marked lack of specialisation and a virtual absence of status differentiation, the system of social relations between individuals is much more intensified than in a larger, more economically advanced community, with a considerable amount of specialisation and marked status differentiation. On Clare people earn their living in the same way, spend their money in the same way, and their leisure in the same way. In fact each

1. Raymond Firth. Elements of Social Organisation. London, 1951, p. 41.

individual in the community lives a life virtually the same as that of any other in the community, and they interact constantly with each other in every sphere of social activity. The system of social relations is consequently much more closely knit and well-integrated than in a larger, more internally differentiated society. As Firth¹ says, "What emerges from many of the scientific community studies in the West is the comparatively undifferentiated character of the small community, its strong social solidarity, and the close integration of its social, economic and other activities."

One of the most important considerations in making such a study of the system of social relations in a community, rural or urban, is to decide how to differentiate between the social relations of the community under study and the social relations between this community and the wider society of which this community is an integral part. Firth says that in any community study there is a need to differentiate between "the unit of general survey," the wider society, and the "unit of personal observation," the community under study. In my investigations "the unit of general survey", was the south-west corner of County Mayo, and the neighbouring islands of Achill and Inishturk, including Clare Island, which was of course the "unit of personal observation."

The "unit of personal observation," Firth says, can be one of two types, "the integral community," which is structurally self-contained and independent to a great extent of the wider society

1. Firth. op. cit., p. 47 et seq.

to which it belongs geographically, and the "sectional community," which is "structurally a part of a wider entity."

However isolated a community may be it is very rarely that it can be regarded as "integral" in the sense of being completely independent of the wider society to which it belongs. Redfield¹ defines isolation in the following way. "A society is isolated to the extent that contacts among members of the local society (community) are many and intimate and characterised by a high degree of mutual understanding of much of the habitual mental life of one another, while contacts between members of the local society and outsiders are few, not intimate, and characterised by a lower degree of mutual understanding." If we agree with this definition Clare Island can be regarded as being isolated socially from the wider society to which it belongs, in the same way that, being an island, it is isolated from it geographically. Yet though contacts with the mainland, the wider society, may be few, and mutual understanding at a minimum, Clare Island cannot be regarded as an "integral community" since it is, in its economic and religious organisation, and in its political affiliations, closely linked with the mainland. It must therefore be regarded as a "sectional community."

Though it is less easy to decide where the system of social relations between individuals in the community itself and in the wider society can be separated, in a sectional community, than in an integral one, simply because in an integral community social relations with the wider society are at a minimum, or may hardly

1. Robert Redfield. The Folk Culture of Yucatan. Chicago, 1941, p. 16.

exist at all, the geographical isolation of an island community is of great advantage to the ethnographer in this respect.

A "sectional" community on the mainland, however closely integrated it may be, is in almost constant contact with other adjacent communities. It is often difficult in choosing such a community for study to decide exactly what constitutes the "unit of personal observation," and how to delimit it, to decide where one community merges with another, the point at which a dividing line must be drawn between them, and to decide to what extent the other communities adjacent to the unit of personal observation must be taken into account. An island community is geographically isolated from all other communities and it is therefore far easier to assess the degree and frequency of interaction, or the lack of it, with other communities, with the "wider society," than it is to do so when studying a mainland community, where those people living on the peripheries, if not the community as a whole, are interacting constantly with other adjacent communities. In such a situation it is virtually impossible to separate and isolate the community under study from extraneous influences, one of the first requirements of scientific investigation.

Though in making a study of the social relations in a rural community the ethnographer is primarily concerned with the interaction between individuals in the unit of personal observation, if this is a sectional community then his study will obviously be incomplete if he does not also take into account the social relations of the community with the wider society of which it is a component part. Williams¹, in his study of Gosforth, a West Cumberland parish

1. W.M. Williams. The Sociology of an English village: Gosforth. London, 1956.

composed of a small village and outlying sheep farms, could not ignore the importance to the people of Gosforth of the adjacent market town and the social relations existing between Gosforth and the people of this town, and the adjacent districts. Similarly, although Clare Island is much more isolated than Gosforth, in Redfield's sense of the word, from the wider society, I have had to take into account in my examination of the social relations of the islanders, the contacts and interaction, not only between Clare Island and the mainland, but between Clare Island and Great Britain and Clare Island and the United States, since, through emigration, a network of social relations has been established between these countries and the island.

Though the importance of recording the culture of Clare Island before it disappears was the main motive in my choice of this island community I was also concerned with the effect on the island community of this threat of its extinction, and with the extent to which the islanders refuse to accept the reality of this threat and to acknowledge that their culture has suffered a radical change with the decline in population. How do people faced with the prospect of the rapid extinction of their way of life react to it? Do they become discouraged by the prospect of the future and refuse to adapt themselves to existing conditions, or do they make a conscious effort to ensure the survival of their culture by making adjustments and adaptations to the changing conditions, modifying the old way of life where necessary to make possible the smooth functioning of the community under conditions of stress which threaten to cause disphoria?

In such a dying society one can expect to find the following characteristics:-

1. The absence of certain traditional elements in the culture which no longer fit in with the new way of life.
2. Few opportunities for social interaction, accompanied by a heightened interest in participation on occasions when opportunities are offered, and by a tendency to over-elaborate the ritual of existing institutions.
3. A feeling of pessimism because of the recognition of the decline of community life coupled with presence or absence of methods evolved to counteract this feeling.

In studying a dying society the ethnographer expects to meet with certain specific difficulties which he would not be likely to meet with in a normal community. A dying culture cannot be a complete one. Whatever the reason for its decline, that reason will have its effect on the existing culture. On Clare Island the chief reason for the decline is the emigration of the young people, and their refusal to remain on the island. The effect this has had is to reduce the people of marriageable age on the island to a mere handful, and this in turn has resulted in the virtual absence of marriages on the island. In the last ten years there have only been three marriages, two of which occurred more than five years ago. This in turn has obviously had an influence on the number of births on the island. Consequently this study of the social organisation of Clare Island may lack some of the descriptions of such "rites de passage" as birth, and marriage, which one expects to be universal to every culture, simply because

they are no longer part of the fabric of life on Clare, and no longer take place with any degree of frequency. This is one of the phenomena which the ethnographer of a dying society must take into account.

A peculiar feature of Clare Island life, which can be considered as another feature of a dying culture, is the importance which the islanders attach to occasions which afford opportunities for social interaction, such as funerals or dances. An instance of this is the custom of holding a dance in the evening in the house in which the "station" has been held that morning (see later chapters), a custom which used to be widespread throughout the communities of the western seaboard, but which has virtually died out in the last few years except in a few isolated communities such as Clare Island and Inishturk, where it is still carried out. On Clare Island the "station dance" is surrounded with much ritual, and is of great importance to the whole community - it is of significance to the islanders as a link with the past, and is of vital importance in the social organisation.

Similarly there is much less ceremony on the occasion of a funeral on the adjacent mainland, and in other west coast communities, than there is on the island. Since occasions which afford opportunities for social interaction are so few and far between on Clare they are consequently exploited to the full and tend to be of a much more intensified and emotional nature than the occasion itself warrants (see "Station Dance.")

There is no doubt that the islanders are fully alive to the fact that their culture faces the threat of extinction in the near

future, and that their attitude to this situation is one of pessimism. Their constant references to the island way of life thirty or so years ago, and how superior it was to that of today, their complaints of the "deadness" of present day life on the island, of the prevalence of old and unmarried people, and the lack of opportunities for social interaction such as dances, because of the decline in population, shows that they feel their position keenly and resent it.

Clare possesses the three characteristics of a dying culture, absence of specific culture traits, intensified participation in opportunities for social interaction, and an attitude of pessimism to the decline.

¹
Linton in his article on "Nativistic movements," defines a nativistic movement as "any conscious, organised attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture." He stresses that attempts are never made to reconstruct or preserve the culture as a whole; only selected and symbolic elements of the culture are preserved or reconstructed.

He distinguishes between a "revivalistic" nativistic movement, which is an attempt to revive extinct elements of the culture, (such a movement could be said to be taking place on Clare today if attempts were being made to persuade people to marry and settle on the island instead of emigrating.) and a "perpetuative" nativistic movement, which is an attempt to perpetuate current elements of the culture, the elements of the culture chosen for emphasis being as a rule symbols of a period when the society was

1. Ralph Linton. Nativistic Movements. American Anthropologist, Vol. 47, 1955.

free, or great. The main function of such a perpetuative nativistic movement, Linton postulates, is the maintenance of social solidarity.

The way in which the people of Clare Island have reacted to the extinction of their culture can, in my opinion, be regarded as a perpetuative nativistic movement. The islanders are making every attempt to preserve certain elements of their culture and to maintain their traditional way of life in the face of changing conditions. The perpetuative movement on the island takes the form of a determination to maintain social institutions such as the "house" and "station" dances in spite of the decline in population, to counteract the severe shortage of male labour on the farms, by intensifying co-operation between neighbours and kin at all stages of the agricultural cycle, by refusing to admit the decline of the island by maintaining the separate identity of the thirteen villages, some of which now contain as few as two houses, and refusing to amalgamate them, and by a glorification of certain aspects of the past, such as the social life, historical traditions and so on.

The result of this perpetuative movement on the island is an increase in social interaction, and in the cohesion of the community, and the maintenance of social solidarity in a society which, without such a determined movement on the part of the island as a whole, could disintegrate.

This nativistic movement of the islanders is all the more remarkable considering the composition of the island population. The community is not, as one might expect from such a reaction to the threat of extinction, composed entirely of people who have chosen voluntarily to remain on the island. Clare cannot be

regarded as a community in which the majority of the adult members have rejected other cultures in favour of their traditional way of life. It is on the contrary, a community in which the majority of the adult people have been forced, by ties of kinship, either to remain on the island instead of emigrating, or, once having emigrated, to return to look after kin. Those who remain now are chiefly not those who want to, but those who must. There is a minority group composed of those who emigrated and chose to return because they preferred island life, or chose to remain on the island without emigrating because they preferred the security of island life, but the majority are held there by kinship ties. Nevertheless there is amongst the islanders, whatever the reasons for their presence in the community, and despite the fact that membership of the community is, in a great number of cases, of an involuntary nature, a remarkable unity of outlook, which is manifested by the co-operation of those who must stay, with those who want to stay, in maintaining the "status quo" of island life. The continuance of island culture depends on the efforts made by the community as a whole to maintain the cohesion of the society by co-operating to ensure the uninterrupted functioning of the traditional way of life.

Though it is the co-operation and adaptations of the islanders which make the continuance of community life a possibility, this movement can only, as the table of Birth Statistics has shown, be a temporary measure, since unless the marriage rate increases, and with it the birth rate, and unless there is a radical decline in emigration, the island community will inevitably cease to exist. A decline in the next thirty years comparable in size to that which

has taken place in the last thirty years, a decline of 256 people, would lead to the total disappearance of the remaining 223 people.

In order to examine whether or not the nativistic movement on Clare Island can be regarded as fulfilling the requirement of maintaining social solidarity, the ways in which the islanders attempt to maintain the culture must be examined. The co-operation between kin and neighbours, to counteract the shortage of male labour, the adaptation bachelors living alone have to make in adjusting themselves to women's roles as well as men's to counteract the lack of marriage, and the ways in which the islanders attempt to maintain the traditional way of life by keeping up such institutions as the "house" and "station" dances, and visiting, must be examined against the historical background, and the background of life on the island today, the economic system, contacts with the outside world, and the social organisation.

CHAPTER 11.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Clare Island, in the Barony of Murrisk, stands at the mouth of Clew Bay, four miles from the coast of County Mayo. On the east side it is flanked by the shores of Mayo, perhaps the most underdeveloped and least known of the counties of Ireland, a county of small farmers struggling on poor, barren soil, and supplementing their tiny income by fishing in the coastal districts. On the west side there is nothing between Clare Island and America but the Atlantic which crashes against the towering western cliffs of the island.

Sir Henry Doran, in his report to the Congested Districts Board in 1894 writes, "Clare Island is not an inviting place. Nature did little for it, and mankind has robbed it of all it could. Almost the entire of the coastline rises from the sea in precipitous cliffs and there are but three or four places where a landing can be effected in rough weather. Along the southern and eastern shores the cliffs range from 200-100 feet over sea level, and the northern boundary is formed by a mountain which at its highest point is 1,520 feet above the sea, and having on the sea face cliffs from 800-1000 feet high."

From east to west the island is 5 miles long, and at its greatest breadth is not more than $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles wide. Like most of the west coast islands, it is rocky and treeless, the only natural vegetation being a small coppice of stunted hazel, oak, holly and birch on the eastern side, extending over about two acres. The west is virtually denuded of trees except for an

occasional fuschia bush.

The geological composition of the island is a mixture of Upper and Lower Silurian rocks, and Carboniferous and Red Sandstone rocks. The two large hills of Croaghmore and Knockaveen which dominate the island landscape constitute a higher and older plateau of Silurian rocks, whereas the rest of the island forms a lower and more recent plateau of Carboniferous and Red Sandstone rocks, which has its counterpart on the adjacent mainland.

Of the 3,949 acres of land on the island by far the greater part of it is non-arable land, consisting of hills and bogs, the former used for sheep pasturage, the latter for turf-cutting . Most of the arable land is concentrated along the low-lying southern and western shores and in sheltered valleys in the north.

The climate is typical of the coastal regions of western Ireland in that there is a heavy annual rainfall of approximately 50 inches per year, the mean temperature for January, the coldest month, being 42. 8 F. and the mean temperature of August, the warmest, 58.2 F. In winter there are severe storms when the seas beat against the low cliffs of the southern shore and often flood the low-lying sea meadows. Shand¹ says of Clare in 1885, "The inhabitants of the islands off the coast are barely removed from beggars. In Clare Island the people gathered together into a village have only their scanty potato patches, and a commonity of hill grazing. The winds are so violent and the weather is so inclement, that the wretched store cattle,

1. A.I. Shand. Letters from the West of Ireland. Reprinted from "The Times", London 1885.

even had they better pasturage, could scarcely put on flesh. When an Atlantic gale is blowing and the harvest is being brought home, it is hard to hold the oat sheaves on the backs of the donkeys. In an autumn storm of 1882 all the crops at one place were blown bodily into the sea, and the people were to be seen boating and wading after them, fishing out the floating sheaves as best they could."

The Early History of the Island

There is evidence on most of the islands of the west coast of habitation in, or before, neolithic times. The great forts of Dun Aengus and other antiquities of the Aran Islands, forts and artefacts of the neolithic age, and megalithic structures on Achill Island, provide ample evidence of the early habitation of these islands, but there is very little evidence of life and habitation on Clare until the Famine. "From the historian's standpoint the record of the island is nearly a blank."¹ Probably the earliest record of life on the island is provided by the Bronze Age spear head found in a kitchen midden along with some stone tools, a proof that even as early as the Bronze Age Clare was inhabited.

At various points round the coast of the island there are "duns", walled-up rock type cliff forts, settlements of early tribes which Westropp² dates as probably post-Bronze age, and before 400 A.D. The two largest of these cliff forts are situated

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1. Biological Survey of Clare Island 1911-15. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.
 2. Ibid.

on two small islets at the west and north of the island, which are believed by the islanders to be the first parts of the island to be populated.

The next evidence of habitation of the island is furnished by the small Cistercian abbey, now in ruins, standing next to the present chapel, which was built, as a punishment cell to which penitent monks could retreat, in 1224.

Tradition has linked Clare Island with the O'Malleys, a tribe famed for their warlike exploits on land and sea, and especially for their leader, Granuaile, or Grace, who was the "sea queen" of the west, and led her ships against the English fleet, plundering and wrecking all along the coasts of the British Isles.

Charles Browne¹ writes, "In the tenth century, after the establishment of surnames in Ireland, we find the O'Malleys, descendants of Conn of the Hundred Battles, established as rulers of Umhall, a district which comprised the present baronies of Burrishoole and Murrisk, and here they have remained ever since." This district of Umhall included Clare Island, in the barony of Murrisk.

The Annals of Connacht mention Clare Island in connection with the O'Malleys as early as 1235 - "Domnall and Muirchertach, sons of Muiredach O'Maille, were killed by Domnall, son of Magnus, son of Muirchertach O'Conchobair, and by Niall Ruad, son of Cathal O'Conchobair, on Clare Island, and there they were buried."

Later in 1235 it was reported in the Annals that there was conflict and skirmishes between the Galls, the later Irish of mixed

1. Charles Browne, op. cit. Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy, Vol. V.

Norman, English, French and Welsh stock, and the older tribes of the west, especially the O'Malleys, in Clew Bay. The Galls killed many of the inhabitants of these islands, none of which, with the exception of Clare, are inhabited today, "There was not a cow on an island of Inis Mod," (the archipelago in Clew Bay) "that was not put ashore (on the mainland) before nightfall, and they (the owners of the cattle) would have gone before, driven by thirst and hunger, but that they were restrained; and many base people were killed that night. On the next day, a Friday, the Galls landed on the islands of North Umhall, but the commanders of the soldiery would not suffer them to kill anyone, out of respect for the Passion."

Whether or not Granuaile actually occupied the castle which stands at the entrance to Clare harbour, and which tradition has it was her home for several years, is not known, but Granuaile herself is said to be buried in the Island abbey, and when the land of Ireland was divided into the present baronies in 1574 the O'Malleys were recognised to be chiefs of the Barony of Murrisk, and were the only people in the barony to possess castles, which indicates that the castle, if not the home of Granuaile, was at least the property of the O'Malleys.

Fourteen years later, in 1588, there is evidence not only that Clare was inhabited by the O'Malleys, but that there was a warlike branch of the family resident at the time - it was then that a ship of the Spanish Armada received harsh treatment at the hands of the O'Malleys. "Upon those lonely rocks (Clare) a large ship commanded by Don Pedro Mendoza foundered with 700 men. Less

than 100 had landed two days before and those were all slaughtered by Dowdary Roe O'Malley for the sake of the gold which they had brought with them. Mendoza tried to escape with some fishing boats, but he shared the fate of his men.....one poor Spaniard and an Irishman of Wexford were spared out of 800¹ - other sources put the number of men slaughtered at 300, or at 100, but all blame the O'Malleys for the slaughter, and there is no doubt that considerable violence took place.

The Island was probably not peopled by permanent settlers; apart from the monks, and the warlike O'Malleys, who used it as a base for their operations, until Penal Times. It was during the Penal Times in Ireland that the dispossessed and land-hungry occupants of the north came crowding down from Ulster into Connaught and settled wherever there was available land along the sea coast, shortage of land forcing them to settle on the islands. The composition of the present-day population of Clare Island is probably due in a large part to the mixing of these new settlers from the north with the indigenous population of O'Malleys, Tooles and other western clans, already inhabiting the island. The Survey of Clare made in 1911 shows that of the 71 families then on the island the surnames of 25 of them indicate a northern origin, from Ulster, Donegal etc., and of five of them descent from the Norman invaders who came to Ireland several centuries earlier.

It was during this period too that the island became denuded of trees. Prior to this period the island had been covered in dense forest. The islanders say that the origin of the name "Cliara"

1. R. Bagwell. Ireland Under the Tudors. London, 1890.

which is the Irish name for the island, means "wooded", but that the Cromwell soldiery, afraid that such forests would make an ideal hiding ground for rebels and fugitives, burnt and cut down all the forest and left the island bare of trees. The huge sawn-off stumps of trees still preserved in the peat-bogs indicate the extent of the forest and the great size of the trees.

The Landlord System.

From Penal times until the end of the nineteenth century Clare Island, like the rest of Ireland, was the property of a landlord, given ownership of it by the British Government, and empowered to exact rents from the occupiers of the land, his tenants. Clare Island was owned by a series of landlords, mostly absentee landlords who had appointed agents to inspect the property and collect the rents. Landlords had the power of eviction for the non-payment of rents, which were often exorbitant. Many families on the island could not raise the money for the rent from the produce they grew on their land, and so the men of the family had to emigrate every year to England or Scotland to work on the potato fields in the spring and summer to bring back enough money in the winter to pay the rent. Three pounds was the average amount a man would be able to bring home to his family, and this, together with money earned from the sale of oats and farm produce, paid for the rent.

Living conditions on Clare and on the other west coast islands at this time were of the most primitive type. Most of the houses were mere hovels of stones, or of branches, with no separate

accommodation for the animals, all of which in the winter, lived in the one room with the family. This custom of having animals in the house did not die out until recently on Clare. A man of 40 remembers how, when he used to go to dances as a boy of twenty, the ram would be tied up in a corner of the kitchen, even while the dance took place. Barrington¹ in 1884 reports of the Blasket Islands, "the mud cabins are of the poorest description," and Browne reports that in Inishkea the poverty was so great that people had no beds, and frequently no blankets either, but just slept on the straw in the kitchen, ranged along the wall, first the children, then the women of the family, then the men, and then any strangers who might be in the house. This arrangement being of course, he adds, so that the women were separated from any contact with the strangers at night.

People were reluctant to make improvements to the appearance of their houses since the addition of even such a small item as a door or window caused a sharp increase in the rent. Consequently if improvements were made they were carried out as inconspicuously as possible, in order to escape the notice of the landlord or his agent, who would immediately raise the rent if they noticed any improvements had been made. Not all landlords allowed their tenantry to live in such squalid conditions. H. Coulter², reporting on conditions in the west of Ireland at this period, says of the Marquis of Sligo, landlord of Westport demesne, "He has had his lands "striped" or divided, and insists on the tenants building new houses, having three windows in front, and providing proper

1. R.A. Barrington. Report on the Flora of the Blasket Islands. Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy, Vol. III, 1883.

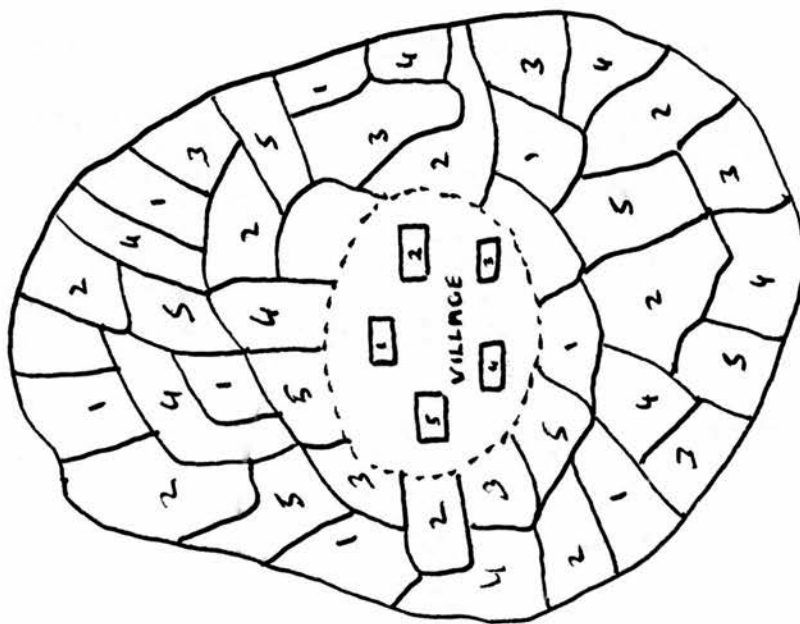
2. H. Coulter. The West of Ireland. Dublin, 1862.

offices and sheds for their cattle. Some twelve to thirteen years ago it was a common thing to see three or four cows tied up inside the farmer's dwelling, whilst the pig had the run of the house at all times.....the Marquis will not allow this practice to be carried on and he has undoubtedly done much to reform the habits of his tenantry in this respect. He assists them to build their houses by giving timber from his woods for that purpose and his lands are let at reasonable rents."

An impression of the general appearance of a County Mayo landscape was given by Wakefield¹ in 1812, "I could see nothing but bad tillage and thin population. The people in general were dressed in woollen clothes of a dark colour and their cabbins, which seemed to be more confined than those in other parts of Ireland, had a most miserable appearance, and gave a dull and gloomy aspect to the whole country." The same opinion is shared by McParlan², who describes the houses as "Some very poor, made of turf sods, badly roofed and thatched, and full of smoke and dirt, as they have neither chimneys or offices."

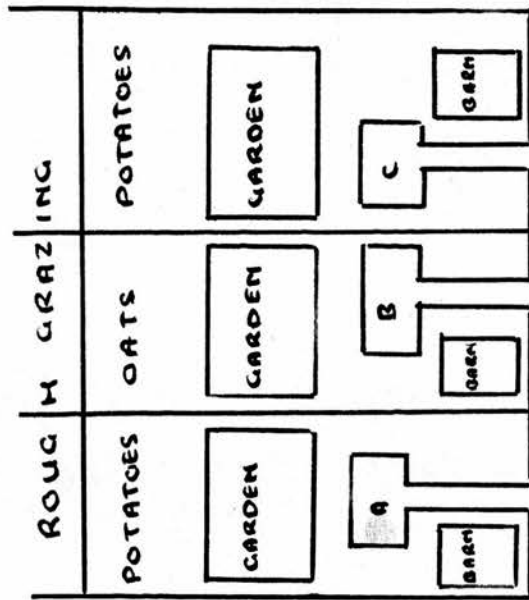
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Pim confirms this impression of the general poverty and gloom in Mayo at this time - "It is impossible for those who have not visited the western coast of Ireland to form an adequate idea of that country, or of the condition of its inhabitants. The land is occupied for the greater part by vast and dreary bogs and wet and rocky mountains. It is generally quite destitute of trees for

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1. Edward Wakefield. An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political, Vol. I & II. London, 1812.
 2. J. McParlan, op. cit.
 3. Jonathan Pim. The Conditions and Prospects of Ireland. Dublin, 1848.

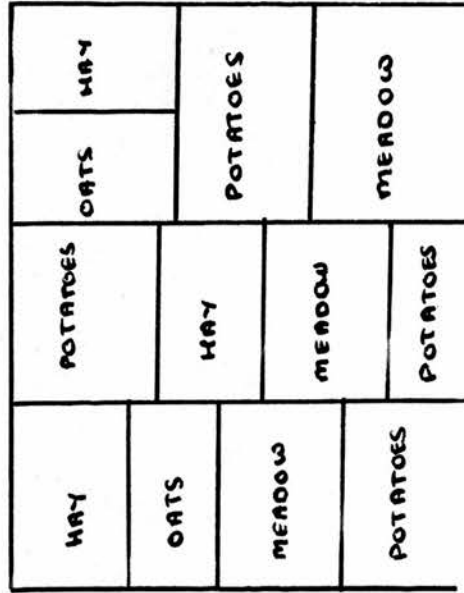


A RUNDAL VILLAGE.

PLAN OF RUNDAL VILLAGE SHOWING
THE HOUSES OF THE VILLAGE SURROUNDED
BY THE VILLAGE LAND. EACH VILLAGE FARMS
CERTAIN PLOTS OF LAND, NOT NECESSARILY
ADJACENT, ON THE COMMON VILLAGE LAND.



ROAD



CLARE ISLAND FARMS TODAY.

A DIAGRAM OF THREE TYPICAL ISLAND
FARMS IN THE VILLAGE OF QUATEEN.

many miles inland. There are probably thousands of women and children on the western coast who have never seen a shrub more than four foot high.....The villages in which the greater proportion of these people reside are scattered at wide intervals on the sides of the hills or near the sea coast. They consist of a collection of hovels of the most primitive construction, grouped without regularity, formed of clay, or loose stones, with green sods stuffed into the interstices, a hole in the wall supplying the place of a chimney; the thatch is often broken, admitting the light and air in many places.....the space in front of the cabin is generally occupied by a heap of wet manure, which frequently covers the entrance of the hut itself, rendering cleanliness and decency impossible."

The land on Clare Island was not divided up among the tenants in such a way that each one had his own piece of land, on which he and his family lived and worked, but was held in "rundale" .

The rundale system of tenancy has a strong resemblance to the open-field system of England. The people living in a particular village hold their land in common. Each man has his holding of arable land scattered among those of his neighbours (see diagram), the strips of arable land belonging to one man being separated from those of his neighbours by stone marks and balks about a foot wide left unploughed. Meadow land was divided up in the same way. Grazing was held in common. A man's holding of arable and pasture land was proportionate in size to the share of the rent he paid. Otway¹ describes a rundale village organisation on Achill Island

1. Caesar Otway. A Tour in Connaught. Dublin, 1839.

which would apply equally well to the rundale villages of Clare Island - "all the occupiers of the village held in common from the landlord - there was a portion of the ground nearest to the village enclosed from the rest for the growth of potatoes and oats, and a wild range of boggy and mountain land outside was commonage on which each family had the right of pasture for a certain number and quantity of cattle - the enclosed land was also, in a measure, in common, for though each family had its own ridge, no family had a field to itself."

"Each family had their respective ridges in the enclosure; a family might have more ridges than one, but it did not follow that they should be adjoining one another. A man, if he wanted more tillage ground, could not go beyond the old village enclosure and take in a new spot for himself.....if he brought in any new piece to cultivation every householder had a right to his ridge therein, as well as the man who made the improvement." This description shows the communal nature of the village organisation, no one villager being able to cultivate a new piece of land without sharing it with his fellow villagers.

On Clare Island, in the nineteenth century, the population consisted of a number of small farmers crowded into "rundale" villages, in the sheltered valleys between the hills and the bogland. At this time, that is before the Famine of 1845, the island was supporting a population of over a thousand people, and there was intense land shortage. This was caused by over-crowding, and also by the practice of sub-division of the land. Any emigration that took place then was of a seasonal and not a permanent

nature. A father had to provide for all his sons on the land when they married, so he would allot each of them, except the one who inherited his father's land, a portion of land, and when their sons in turn, were ready to marry, the land would be still farther sub-divided to provide them with land too. This endless subdivision of land meant that the size of the holdings was constantly diminishing, while their number was constantly increasing, and it was often virtually impossible to make a living from them at all. Another factor which increased the confusion over land was the practice of "conacre" letting. A man who had more land than he was able to farm would manure the land he did not need, prepare it for the planting of oats or potatoes, and then sell the use of it for one year to a land-hungry family, charging about £4 per acre per year.

On the island all available land was cultivated intensively, right up into the hills. Small pieces of land were cut from the bog, and drained, and every square yard of cultivable land on the island was planted with potatoes, the islanders' staple food, and with wheat or oats which they sold as a cash crop to provide money to pay the rent.

The Great Famine on Clare Island

It was in 1845 that the Great Famine came to the island. The Famine was caused by the potato blight, which first made its appearance in the autumn of 1845 and again in 1846, and 1848. It was a period when throughout Ireland a million people died from illness and starvation. Not only was the situation, the almost total failure of the staple crop, the potato, serious enough, but

during the whole of the famine years the Irish continued to export the grain they grew as a cash crop to England to pay their rents, while they were starving through lack of food. In spite of O'Connell's efforts to persuade the British Government to stop this export it continued steadily throughout the famine years.

Mayo was one of the counties which suffered most seriously from the effects of the famine -- "Mayo had suffered terribly; in 1848 the county showed no signs of recovery when the rest of the country was making a great effort to get under way again."¹

When the potato blight reached Clare Island, already overcrowded, with many families living precariously near starvation point, because of the sub-division of land and the high rents they were forced to pay, the potatoes rotted in the ground, and were just left there to rot, blackened and uneatable. Even today occasional small patches of green, once cultivated land, high on the hills, or amongst the bogs, still form very pronounced ridges, and the islanders say that such high-ridged fields are relics of the famine, when the rotting crop was never dug out from the ridges, but left to decay there by dying families.

The failure of the potato crop, and the export of much-needed corn to pay rents left the islanders in a state of starvation. People used to be so desperate with hunger that the older islanders recall being told by their parents that when the rotting, sea-soaked carcasses of animals used to be washed up on the island coasts the people would rush down to collect them to eat. People were dying daily of starvation, dysentery and fever. The islanders tell of

1. R.D. Edwards & T.D. Williams. The Great Famine 1845-52.

Dublin, 1956.

whole families dying, and of people taking their dead to the chapel for burial and dying themselves on the way, from hunger. So many people died that they could not all be taken to the chapel, and were just buried in the bogs. At the north of the island there are two places in the bogs that served as "graveyards" in those hunger years, when the victims of the famine were buried hurriedly and without ceremony. Even at this time, when, in the mainland village of Louisburgh it was reported that there were 10-20 deaths daily, and when on the island people were dying in great numbers, in 1847 fourteen schooners of about 200 tons each left Westport for England, laden with wheat and oats, grown by the starving people in this region, including Clare Island, who were faced with the choice of starving, or of being evicted from their houses because they could not pay the rent.

While the islanders were dying daily of starvation, the "souters" came to Clare to attempt to convert the islanders from Catholicism in exchange for free food. These "souters", so-called because of the bowls of soup which they dispensed to the needy, were Protestant missionaries who seized upon the Famine as an opportunity for attempting to convert the Irish Catholics to the Protestant religion. They attempted to bring about conversions in distressed areas such as Achill, by establishing a settlement, a model farm, where instruction in agricultural methods was given, new methods and techniques of farming, to avert the prospect of future famine, introduced, and where infant teaching, free medical care and food were given to all converts. Feeling even among the most distressed families, was very bitter against these proselytisers, and the number of their conversions was surprisingly few. On Achill

priests told their flock, "Have nothing to do with these heretics - curse them - spit in their faces, cut the sign of the cross in the air when you meet them, as you would do against devils - throw stones at them, pitch them, when you have the opportunity, into the bog holes."

The Clare Islanders tell of how, when starvation and fever was at its highest during the famine, some "souters" came to the island and attempted to establish a settlement in a wild and remote part of the island, among the most needy. They prepared a huge cauldron of soup to dispense to the hungry, on their arrival, but the independent islanders hurled a large stone into the cauldron, smashing it to pieces and scattering its contents, and broke all their equipment, driving them off the island, refusing to accept charity from Protestants.

Great though the threat of starvation was, the ever-present threat of eviction for non-payment of rates was even greater. Once evicted, a family had no alternative but to rely on the charity of neighbours, or go to the poorhouse. An islander tells of how his grandfather was drowned while out fishing, and that same day his widow and four young children were evicted from the house because they would no longer be able to pay the rent, and all their belongings thrown out of the house into the road, by the landlord's agent, including the kitchen dresser, which is now a prized possession of the family, and a constant reminder of the hunger years.

The rents were often exorbitant. The Rev. Ulick Bourke¹, making a plea for the evicted tenants of Mayo in 1883, cites an

1. Rev. Ulick Bourke. A Plea for the Evicted Tenants of Mayo. Dublin, 1883.

an example where a family of seven, living on a holding of which the valuation was £7, was evicted for being unable to pay the annual rent of £13, almost twice the value of the holding. He maintained that emigration on a seasonal basis was the only solution to the problem of raising sufficient money to pay the rents. "For the past thirty years they (Mayo farmers) could not have eked out an existence, paid the master (landlord) supported their household, such as it is, but for the money which they put together during the summer and harvest seasons by labouring in England. As the swallows in the close of September migrate from our shores to a southern clime in search of food and warmth, so the peasant farmers - sons and fathers - in the months of May and June, when they have the crops sown and the turf cut, flee in thousands to England and Scotland, seeking for employment thereby to procure food and to keep over their heads in winter time, the cover of a warm cabin. Out of the few pounds which each saves, the rent, often double the valuation, and even over that amount, must be paid, in the first place, and then the remaining few pounds, if any, together with domestic thrift, enable the peasant to keep the family together."

Robert Collins¹ made a plea to Earl Grey, the British Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, to put a tax on drainage to promote emigration as "one of the most effectual means of relief" in preventing the starvation of families holding under six acres of land who could not get an adequate living from such a small holding, and suggested that the landlords should pay the

1. Robert Collins. Letter to the Rt. Hon. Earl Grey. Dublin, 1847.

passage to America, £2. 10s. per person, for such distressed families.

The Clare Island men used to travel to Scotland every spring as migratory labourers in order to get enough money together to pay the rent of the family holding to the landlord. To many families on the island the hard times of the "hunger years" are still a vivid and tragic memory.

The after effects of the Famine were still evident on Clare Island at the end of the century. The population had undergone a serious decline from which it has never recovered. (Before the Famine the population was 1616, but in 1871 it had declined by more than half to 745). Emigration on a permanent rather than on a seasonal basis, to the United States, and more rarely, to England, became commonplace, and the situation of those remaining families was not encouraging since they were faced with constant threats of eviction and there was still considerable land hunger and distress. Even as late as 1886 J.H. Tuke¹ was organising a fund for the distribution of seed potatoes to distressed areas, of which Clare Island was one.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the Aran Islands are still supporting a thriving population today is because they were virtually unaffected by the Famine, owing to their remoteness from the mainland. Charles Browne² in 1852 writes of these islands, "The islanders have had the singular good fortune never to have

1. J.H. Tuke. Achill and the West of Ireland. Dublin 1886.

2. Charles Browne. Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy 1891-3, Vol. 2.

been visited by the potato blight; never to have had a death from destitution and never to have sent a pauper to the poorhouse."

Feeling among many of the islanders of the west coast at this time against the British Government, landlords and the British constabulary who controlled them, was very bitter. There were many violent protests against evictions and frequent fights between the islanders and those in authority. Clare Island especially had earned a name for "outrages" against authority, of this nature, including the stoning of unwelcome visitors to the island. In 1879 a biologist visiting the Great Blasket at first could not persuade any of the mainlanders to ferry him across, as an attempt made by the police to visit the island a few days earlier, to serve processes on those islanders who had not paid their rents, had been unsuccessful, the islanders meeting the boat at the Quay with a volley of stones and driving it away. When he did eventually land he found the islanders gathered at the Quay, waiting with heaps of stones as ammunition, and it was some time before they accepted his explanation that he was a biologist and allowed him to land.¹

It was at the end of the century, in 1891, that the Congested Districts board was set up. The purpose of this board was to improve the living conditions of people living in distressed, or "congested" areas, the definition of a congested area being one where, "at the commencement of this act more than 20% of the population of a county.....live in Electoral divisions of which the total rateable value, when divided by the number of the population,

1. R.A. Barrington. Op. cit., Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 1884.

gives a sum of less than £1. 10s. for each individual."¹

The Board appointed inspectors with "intimate personal experience of the localities" to spend some months in a congested area and to make a "Base-line report" on it. If the Board then considered the area to be in need of assistance, the area would be purchased from the landlord owning it, and improvements would be made to it. The Board's purpose was to improve the agricultural development of such congested districts, by introducing new stock to improve the old stock, to encourage forestry, fishing and all other industries, to assist emigration where necessary to relieve pressure on the land, and to increase the size of small holdings.

Areas ranking as congested stretched all along the north west, west and south west regions of Ireland, from Lough Foyle in the north to County Cork, including the hinterland of West Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and West Cork, and more especially the coastal districts. In 1892 an inspector of the Board was sent to Clare Island to make a "Base-line report", and on his recommendation the Board purchased the island in 1895 from the landlord, a Westport man, for £5,000, and began to make improvements. The Board was at first very reluctant to purchase the island from the owner as the tenants were refusing to pay their rates, sixteen tenants had been evicted and decrees for eviction obtained against many others, and arrears of rent amounting to £1,588 were owing to the landlord.

When the Board took over the island they found 125 families living in "rundale" villages. Seventeen of these families had no cattle at all and there were "Only 5 landholders' houses in which livestock are not kept."

1. Congested Districts Board Reports 1-15. 1892-1906, and 'Base-line Reports 1892-8', Dublin.

Migratory labour on a seasonal basis was at this time giving way to permanent emigration, though a certain amount of seasonal migration still took place. Out of the total population of 692 it was reported that, "10 migratory labourers leave this island every year. They proceed to England and return shortly before Xmas. They earn £9. 10s. after paying all their expenses, and also bring back new clothes, value £1."

There was very little fishing done, though the islands "are close to excellent fishing grounds," not more than a dozen families fished for any lengthened period, and there were no boats solely employed in fishing. There was only one curragh that engaged in regular lobster fishing.

The inhabitants depended on agriculture and the sale of stock for their livelihood, the number of stock owned by the average family being two cattle, two calves and three pigs, a number of sheep, about ten of which were sold annually, along with calves, pigs, wool and dairy produce. About three acres of land, $1\frac{1}{4}$ acres under oats, the same amount under potatoes, and $\frac{1}{2}$ acre under meadow hay, and perhaps a little cabbage, was the average amount of land a farmer had under cultivation. "Generally speaking, the tenants have good-sized holdings which they do not half cultivate, most of their holdings being under grass."

¹
McParlan, in 1801, writes of Mayo farming, "I have observed no new machine or implement of husbandry, nor is it to be expected in a country so backward in mode and manner of culture (agriculture)"
²
The common loy, five or six common ploughs, harrows with wooden pins

1. J. McParlan. Statistical Survey of County Mayo. Dublin, 1801.

2. A long-bladed spade, which is still used for most of the tillage on the island today.

very few with iron, and very frequently a hand rake, which is used for harrowing in the grain, are the only implements here, unless perhaps the slane for cutting turf." The plough is still not in general use on the island, but apart from this, the only additional farming equipment in use on the island, 157 years later, is the pick, the hoe, and the hay fork.

The islanders reared geese, poultry, and made butter for sale in Louisburgh. A considerable amount of barter took place, especially among the poorer families, who had no money to buy groceries, and who used to exchange eggs, butter and fowls with the shopkeepers, for groceries and other supplies. There were four shops on the island at which the islanders sold, or bartered, their home produce, which the shop-owners sold to Westport dealers.

The islanders used to grow, spin and weave flax into linen, as well as carding and spinning their own wool. The name of one of the villages, "Tormore," "The Bleaching Green," indicates that the making of linen was once important to the islanders, though in 1911 the Survey investigators reported that, "The present generation has never seen a field of growing flax, much less has it had any experience of the spinning of woollen thread or the weaving and bleaching of the linen fabric."

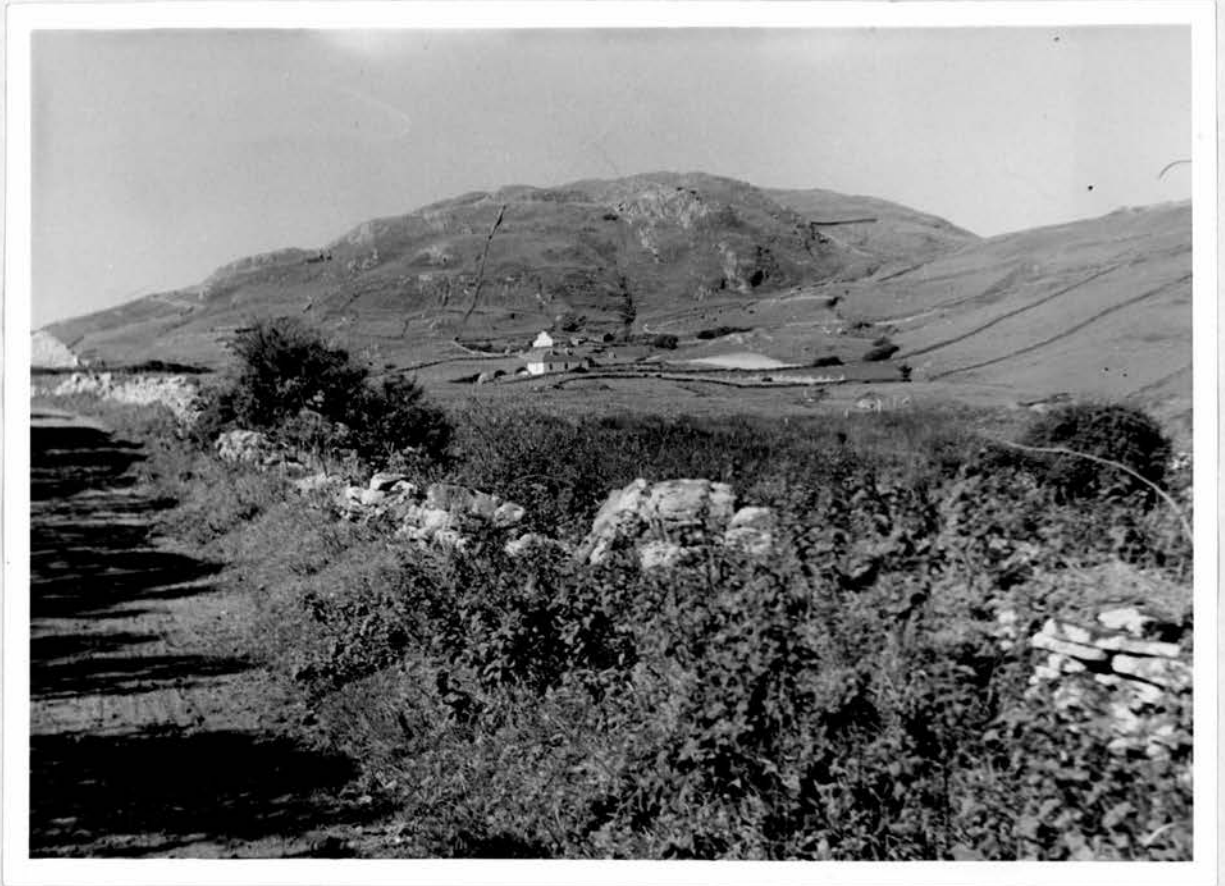
Until 25 years ago the islandmen used to wear white "bainin" jackets with three buttons and no collar, an ordinary one for everyday, and a clean white one for Sunday, with homespun black and white tweed trousers, and a stiff white collar. At that time every house on the island possessed a spinning wheel, and the women used to spin their own thread, make tweed, "bainin" and home made

blankets,in strips 27 inches wide,as the looms were narrow,the strips later being sewn together.If a daughter was to get married she was expected to take to her husband's home four pairs of home made blankets. The women of her village would all bring their spinning wheels to her house,and help to weave the blankets, making a party of it.Spinning has not yet died out altogether on the island.Several middle aged women still card and spin their own wool,and knit it into socks and sweaters for the men,though it is now done chiefly as a winter pastime.

At this time Irish,as a spoken language,had virtually died out on the island.Today the islanders of Clare,like many of the islanders of the west coast,have "lost the Irish."This is probably due to a great extent to the need to emigrate,and to take up employment overseas.As the islanders say,"What use is Irish to you,if you want to get a job in England or America?" In 1839 Otway¹ reports that Irish was the everyday language of the islanders,and that,on leaving the island with the inspector of the coastguard,"While we were getting on board there was a strange uproar- a number of the islanders who could speak nothing but Irish,were vociferating most furiously,and with threatening gestures pointing to one of the coastguards," accusing him of,"taking their provisions from them and not paying them,and.....of taking liberties which neither fathers,husbands,nor brothers,would suffer." In 1911 Survey investigators spoke to the islanders in Irish,though English had at that time replaced Irish as the everyday language,and found that most of the middle aged and elderly people could still speak Irish. It has now,however,virtually died out.Though all the villages,all the rocks,humps and hollows on the island have Irish names which are

1.Caesar Otway. A Tour in Connaught. Dublin. 1801

THE ROAD TO THE CHAPEL AND THE VILLAGE OF GLEN.



Note the way in which the holdings are
"striped", being separated from each other,
by walls running the length of the holding.
This is shown at the right of the picture.

always used (English place names are virtually non-existent on the island) yet people of fifty or so are unable to give the English meaning of these place names, and admit that they cannot speak a word of Irish.

The Work of the Congested Districts Board.

The Congested Districts Board found that the islanders were in need of instruction, "The inhabitants.... have lost almost all habits of industry and self-reliance. They have good holdings of land as a rule and the mountains adjacent on which their stock graze, are celebrated for their feeding qualities; but they live very extravagantly and in good years make no effort to lay by anything to meet adverse circumstances." "The methods of husbandry adopted are of the most careless and primitive kind, and there is not a man on the island who makes, or has made, the slightest attempt at the improvement of his land."

The Board was impressed chiefly by the "rundale" system of tenancy- "The system of tenancy is the worst I have seen anywhere, and it was inevitable that it should prove ruinous to landlords and tenants alike." The lack of fencing and absence of any sort of division between the commonage and the arable land also came in for severe criticism by the Board. One of the first improvements made by the Board was in fact the construction of a wall, six foot high, and five miles long, made of island stone, which extended from one end of the island to the other, and separated the arable land from the commonage. This wall was built by the islanders themselves, working for wages paid by the Board-a shilling per day for the first man in a house working on the wall, ninepence each for two men from the same house, and if there were three men from the same house they received only sixpence. The islanders used to work on this

wall from dawn till dusk, and because they had no clocks, they used to force themselves to stay awake on a foggy night so that they could be sure of not missing the dawn, and perhaps being dismissed from the work for being late. "People were half savage on Clare Island then, with an occasional full savage thrown in," my informant added. This wall alone cost the Board £1,500 in wages.

Once the arable land was separated from the commonage the Board took all the land that was held in rundale and "striped" it, rearranging the boundaries and dividing up the holdings so that each man had a strip instead of owning pieces of land scattered on a common rundale holding. These seventy-five new holdings were then properly fenced off one from another, over fifty miles of fences being built to separate the holdings, open main drains were made, new houses and outbuildings constructed so that the cattle need no longer share the family dwelling during the winter. Roads were built to connect the holdings to each other, and the most important roads were enlarged and improved so that they were 15-20 feet wide and capable of taking wheeled vehicles. The work was all carried out by the islanders themselves, supervised by the Board, in return for wages, which cost the Board £8,380.

In addition the Board opened a station on the island for the pickling of herring and mackerel, provided a stallion to improve the breed of horses on the island, issued small loans repayable in five years to some of the poorer tenants to help them to stock their land.

The wages paid by the Board to the islanders after the carrying out of these improvements enabled the islanders to pay their arrears of rent, and by 1899, when the work of the Board was completed, they had cleared off their arrears and were paying rent regularly. The work of the Board culminated in 1901 with the purchase of their land

by the islanders, from the Board. This marked the end of centuries of tenancy and the beginning of independence of outside control and interference for the islanders.

The Congested Districts Board was optimistic about the future of the island, when they handed it over to the islanders in 1901 - The opinion expressed by an official of the Board was that "The future of the Clare Islanders may now, we believe, be regarded hopefully because they are showing in many ways a determination to improve their lot."

CHAPTER 3.

ISLAND LIFE TODAY

Outwardly Clare Island has changed very little in appearance since the turn of the century. The only changes that have taken place are those inevitable in a community which is facing the problem of rapid depopulation, overgrown paths, deserted houses, and few people visible either walking along the roads or at work in the fields.

The island has two focal points, the chapel, which is situated on the more level, southern shore of the island, and the Quay, from which the mail boat leaves, and where the house containing the inn, the post office and the shop, stands.

The western road connecting the Quay and the chapel, two miles from the Quay, and the northern road, which leads to the lighthouse, are the chief roads on the island; the rest are little more than stony tracks over the hills connecting one village with another, or winding up the hillsides until they come to an abrupt end in the turf bogs. Some, notably the west and north roads, were built to take considerable traffic, being as much as fifteen to twenty feet wide and constructed to take carts as well as horses, asses and pedestrians. Some, leading down to the sea, afford evidence of the importance of the sea to the islanders at the time of the Congested Districts Board, by whom they were constructed in 1896-9. Now such paths have become grassed over through long disuse, used only by the occasional fisherman in summer, while even the main west and north roads are becoming overgrown with weeds because they are used by so few

people nowadays. The island roads, built with such optimism by the Congested Districts Board sixty years ago, are a more vivid indication than anything else on the island of the rapid decline in population in the last sixty years.

The settlement pattern is very much a scattering of small farms on the few patches of arable soil, concentrated chiefly on the south western side, a more or less level area of fairly good soil, and in the valleys at the north. Though the islanders themselves recognise thirteen separate villages there is no indication to the casual observer of any village organisation. The farms just appear to be scattered haphazardly over the landscape, and there is nothing resembling a village cluster except for the three houses at the Quay and the six houses round the chapel.

The farm houses are frequently built in quite inaccessible places, a long way away from the main track, or high up on a hillside, with their arable land below them near the sea where the land is level, and their rough grazing on the hills behind. They are built with little regard for the desirability of drainage, as often in wet low-lying places as in hilly ones. As one woman said, "The old people built their houses in funny places." One of the most important considerations in the building of a house is its accessibility to river and spring water, and this accounts, to some extent, for the building of houses on what appear to be very unlikely and inconvenient sites. There are three other important considerations in the building of a house, accessibility to the Chapel, The Quay, and to turf bogs. People who are near to the chapel or to the Quay often have to travel several miles every

day to get turf.

No house has been built on the island now for the past forty years, and houses forty years old are still described as "new" . The oldest of the sixty one occupied houses is about a hundred years old. Several houses in good condition have recently fallen empty. Many more are likely to do so in a few years time on the death of their elderly celibate, or childless owners.

The houses were built by the islandmen themselves, using island stone for the walls, and oat straw, rushes, or slate, imported from the mainland, for the roof. The islanders were able to obtain loans from the Government to pay for slate roofs, but in spite of this many prefer to keep the old thatched roof, maintaining that it is cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Those with thatched houses do their own thatching every year after harvest, and scorn the idea of employing a professional thatcher.

Thirty eight of the sixty one houses are slated and the remaining twenty three are thatched. The thatched houses tend to be concentrated in the more remote parts of the island which are difficult of access. Those people living near the Quay and in the neighbourhood of the western harbour have less difficulty in transporting the slate from the boat to the house, and consequently have slated roofs. It is interesting that on Inishturk, the nearest island to Clare, and much more difficult of access from the mainland, where the roads are so rough that in some parts even asses cannot be used on them, all the houses except one are slated.

With the exception of the inn and one farmhouse, built fifty years ago by a man with eleven children, all the houses are single-storied, three-roomed cottages. There are no damp courses and the



damp creeps constantly up the walls, necessitating frequent whitewashing, both inside and out. This, like most other jobs connected with the maintenance of the house, such as repairing the roof, sweeping the chimney and painting the woodwork, is done by the owner himself, or his family. Tasks such as making furniture, or skilled jobs such as putting up a new door, or inserting a new window, are usually left to one of the island's four carpenters. There is little time to make actual improvements to the structure of the house, for instance for the carpenter to install running water in every house, as he has into his own, because in the summer the carpenters, like the other farmers, are pre-occupied with agricultural work, and in the winter everyone requires their assistance for urgent repairs rather than improvements.

Most of the houses are whitewashed, though recently people prefer to strip off all the layers of whitewash on the outside of the house and to recover the bricks with a concrete facing which is more weather resistant. The old style house has windows at the front only, to prevent draughts from the driving wind in winter. In recent years people, especially those who have been to England or the United States, have inserted back windows as well, but though this gives the interior of the house a much brighter aspect, this innovation has proved unpopular, because of the wind and rain in winter, and there is a general feeling that the old people knew best when they had windows at the front only.

The three roomed house has a kitchen in the centre with a door at the front and at the back, and doors leading off it at either side, on one side to the "room" (bedroom) and on the

A THATCHED COTTAGE AT THE WEST.



A typical western farm, with outbuildings at some distance from the house, and only a few fuchsia bushes to afford protection from winter storms.

In the background Croaghmore dominates the western landscape.

other, ideally, to the parlour; in practice the small size of the house means that unless the family is a very small one, the kitchen has to serve as the parlour, the two other rooms both being used as bedrooms. Some houses have a small attic between the ceiling of the "room" and the roof; this may be used as a bedroom for the children, access in this case being by a stairway from the kitchen, or if it has no staircase, it will be used as a storeroom. The paint on the doors and windows is usually a rusty brown, though a small group of neighbours at the west and north paint them a dark green, and one cottage has a red door.

The house is surrounded by a narrow flagstone or concrete path, the "street", which separates it from the yard where the poultry wander. Behind the house, occasionally built on to the end of it, and often as far as fifty yards away from it, are the outbuildings, usually no more than a small cowshed or a turf house, and maybe a small shed for farm tools. Adjacent to the house is the "garden" usually merely a small patch of land where early potatoes and a few other vegetables are grown. Many houses at the west have no garden at all, and very few fuschia bushes to shelter the houses from the winter winds, and this gives them a very barren aspect, unlike the east and north regions of the island where the gardens and houses are sheltered by large wild fuschia hedges.

There is no gas or electricity on the island. Radios are run from batteries which are charged when necessary, on visits to the mainland. The only means of cooking and heating is an open turf fire. Lighting is provided either by an oil lamp, or more

usually by a Tilley lamp. Tilley lamps were only introduced ten years ago to the island, and many islanders still use oil lamps. People remember as children, thirty years ago, when there was no light in the evening apart from the fire, how, when they went visiting at night, they used a hot "coal" (piece of turf) to light their way from house to house. Candles are still frequently used in times of oil shortage.

Apart from the inn, the only house which "has the water in," is the carpenter's. For the rest all the water for washing must be carried from the "river" in buckets, and for drinking, from the spring, both often as much as two hundred yards from the house. No house except the carpenter's has a flush lavatory, or any other sanitary arrangements, even in the shape of an outdoor privy.

The floor of the house is made of concrete. There are no rugs or carpets on the kitchen floor because children, dogs and chickens are wandering in and out all day, and the women sweep the kitchen thoroughly at least three times a day. Some people have laid linoleum in the parlour or in the "room" .

The focal point of the house is the turf fire, which burns constantly and is never allowed to go out, the ashes being raked over it at night to keep it in. It is a minor catastrophe if the fire does go out, because there is a virtual absence of paper and sticks on the island with which to kindle it, and so the people of the house must wait, fireless in the early morning, until a spiral of smoke from the nearest neighbour's chimney indicates that the family is stirring, when a child is sent there to get a few hot "coals" to kindle the dead turf. On the fire everything

for the family, the calves and the poultry, is cooked in large and heavy iron pots hung from a hook over the fire, or in large "ovens" at the side of the fire, big circular iron pots, in which the daily batch of loaves is baked, ~~hot~~ "coals" from the fire being piled on the lid to provide the necessary heat.

A dresser, painted bright ginger brown, dark brown or an emerald green, is another typical article of kitchen furniture, covered in miscellaneous pieces of "delf" and inevitably surmounted by three massive Victorian meat plates, blue, or brown, and white, depicting pastoral scenes, and rarely, if ever, used, except to hold the goose or chicken at Christmas.

The kitchen is not planned for comfort but for utility. A plain wooden table stands under the kitchen window; the family eat all their meals on its brightly coloured oilcloth-covered top. There is usually one comfortable wooden chair with a cushion on it, by the fire, ready for the visitor, or occupied by the "old person" of the house. This chair is the only concession to comfort. The remaining chairs, like the rest of the furniture, are unyieldingly solid, handmade, often by the man of the house, hard, high-legged, short-backed, built to withstand the kicks of several generations of nail-booted peasants. It is only recently that people have begun to acquire furniture from the mainland instead of making it themselves, or getting an island carpenter to make it for them, and such imported items of furniture are still very rare. The tinkers who make periodic visits to the island, selling mattresses and rolls of linoleum, sometimes for cash, sometimes in part exchange for old feather beds and horsehair, or wool, find that the islanders make good customers, because they

welcome the opportunity to acquire such cumbersome articles which they would find awkward to carry back with them from the mainland.

There are rarely more than four chairs in the kitchen, and perhaps a few chests or wooden benches round the walls, on which the children sit in the evening. Some of the older houses have a recess by the side of the fire, curtained off from the rest of the kitchen and concealing a bed. This recess was known as the "out-chat" since, if a member of the family retired to sleep there at night, and visitors came, he could lean out of his bed to chat with them, as they sat by the fire. The kitchen is usually filled with smoke from the turf fire, which discolours the walls and ceilings and necessitates a fresh application of white-wash every three months. Sheep shears, oil skins and old coats hang on the walls and parcels of bacon, wrapped in brown paper, and fishing lines on wooden frames, hang from the ceiling.

A constant reminder to the family of their Catholic faith is provided by the household shrine, a small ledge on the wall on which the red lamp of the Sacred Heart burns, decorated with a statue of the Virgin Mary, or St. Teresa, and with small vases of wild flowers gathered by the children on their way home from school. Sacred pictures decorate the walls and by the door holy water in a small china bowl is sprinkled on the members of the family before they leave the house in the morning.

The beds are still mostly made of the traditional goose feathers, the hearth is still swept with a goose wing, and the floor with a rush broom. There is very little sign of modern innovations in the island homes. Apart from the Tilley lamp, a brightly coloured biscuit tin, a Christmas present from kin in England, or a farming

calendar sent by a store in Westport, the furnishings of the house give little indication that the islanders are living in the twentieth century.

Great importance is attached to the appearance of the house, and the islanders spend much of their spare time decorating and whitewashing their homes in slack periods of the agricultural year. One woman was very upset because three men, kinsmen of hers from Dublin, came to visit her unexpectedly, while the house was in need of a coat of whitewash. I suggested that, being men, they would probably not have noticed anyway - "Arra they wouldn't notice at all," she said, but added that she was just ashamed to be caught out. The same woman got up at seven to whitewash her house, before the rest of the villagers started stirring at nine, so that no one would see her doing it. This acute sensitivity is to a certain extent atypical, but reflects the general values the islanders place on having a well-kept house, and their shame if the house is in a shabby condition. A person who has a dirty or unpainted house is the subject of much censure. One woman refused to let me take a photograph of her house before it had been newly thatched, and another, seeing a photograph I had taken of her house before re-thatching, was genuinely upset and insisted that I destroy the photograph.

An old bachelor who has let his house fall into disrepair is jeered at. He refuses to let anyone visit it. - "There's not a cup on the dresser" says a friend of his in disgust. The roof of the end room has fallen in and there is no glass in the windows. Someone who lets his house fall to pieces and then moves in with a kinsman is regarded as having no pride. It is important to have

the house neat when you are likely to be visited by your own kin who have emigrated, but even more important to have it neat for a "stranger". One man said, of the bachelor above, who was expecting a visit from his sister, and her married son and daughter, from the United States, "Somehow I imagine that the sister will be embarrassed for her son and daughter to see her old home looking like that."

The owner actually made a great effort to repair the house for their arrival, whitewashing, thatching and cleaning it. He accepted a gift from a neighbour of two old windows, and asked the carpenter to make him a new door, as he had no door. He went on a rare visit to the shop, and bought a large parcel of groceries to entertain them in good style, and killed several chickens. When they arrived he said that if he had known they were going to be so nice and easy to get on with he would not have gone to the trouble of repairing the house.

Similarly, at the time of the drought last summer, when every drop of water had to be carried for half a mile or more, a family was getting ready to entertain the wife's first cousin, visiting the island after thirty years in America. The house had been decorated inside and out, and in spite of the water shortage the family were washing all the glasses, ornaments etc. in the parlour in preparation for the arrival of their kinswoman, and also washing the kitchen floor. The cousin was not coming to stay, merely calling in for a formal meal, on invitation. This is a typical example of the pride an island family take in the appearance of their home, and the trouble that they will go to, in order to keep up appearances.

Women are expected to keep the house scrupulously clean, and

must be fastidious in the preparation of food and the washing of dishes. In some houses hens run in and out of the kitchen, and feed from the crumbs on the floor and the dog licks out the oven where the bread is to be baked. People with such houses are condemned as very dirty and others are very reluctant to go into such a dirty house, still less to eat in it, or even to have a cup of tea there. "She's very clean about the house" is a frequent form of praise, even about a person one may dislike. One man who has a reputation for being extremely inhospitable, one of the least-admired qualities on the island, is always praised nevertheless for the extreme neatness of his house. An untidy dirty house would "shame you." Women take a pride in keeping the house clean. "It would shame you if you didn't dust over the shelf (mantelpiece) three times a day", one woman said to me.

The most usual improvements made to the house are the application of concrete facing to the exterior of the house, the insertion of more windows, the replacement of a thatched roof by a slated one, or the building of a porch outside the front kitchen door, in which the cans of oil, buckets and farm implements can be stored, instead of being stored in the kitchen.

The women usually clean the house out once a year, in May or June when the men are turf-cutting at the bog all day, and do not require meals. All the furniture is turned out of the house, which is thoroughly whitewashed or distempered, the bedding is spread on the grass to air, the curtains are washed and the chimney is swept. Most women try to finish the spring-cleaning in two days. Though every woman does this annual spring-cleaning the number of times the house is re-painted varies considerably. Some people only

paint their houses "from station to station", that is only when they have the station in their house, which may be as rarely as every four years. Some paint the woodwork every year or maybe as much as three times a year. One of these women owns a "visiting house" and for that reason it receives a good deal more wear and tear than the average house.

The most important operation in the maintenance of a house is the upkeep of a thatched roof. Though it is thatched with fresh straw every year it must be entirely replaced every few years. The old roof is stripped off entirely and pieces of heathy grass cut from a suitable field, "scraws", three foot wide by 20 foot long and three inches thick, are rolled into gigantic rolls and carried on horses and asses to the house where they are laid on the bare wooden rafters, covered with a layer of rushes, and then thatched. Meanwhile the family is living in one room, which is not being repaired at the same time, while the rest of the house is exposed to the weather. Such repairs are carried out in mid-June, during a spell of fine weather.

Though there has been a considerable improvement in the housing condition since the nineteenth century, there has been very little change in the diet of the islanders. The old people recall the days when they used to live solely on potatoes and buttermilk, selling the butter to obtain more necessary goods, and when tea was a rare treat. The Congested Districts Board¹, however, report that the islanders, in 1896, ate three times daily, a breakfast of tea and home-made bread, a dinner of potatoes, eggs or fish, and perhaps tea, and a supper of potatoes and milk. The island

1. Congested Districts Board, Reports 1-15, 1892-1906, Dublin.

diet is virtually the same today, the most important item of food still being the potato. People frequently say "A meal is not a meal without a potato" and to a man a meal without potatoes is not worth having. For a few months of the year, when all the old potatoes have been eaten and the new ones are not yet ready for digging, from March until June, the islanders have no potatoes and subsist almost entirely on bread, eggs and tea. Meat is a rarity except at harvest time when a sheep is killed by most families, and its blood and some of the meat made into puddings for the winter. Geese and hens are killed periodically for Sunday dinner or when visitors come, and salted bacon is occasionally eaten. From the middle of May onwards on calm summer evenings the men do "line-fishing" from their curraghs, trailing a baited line from the "curragh". Pollack, mackerel and gurnard are chiefly caught, and if plentiful enough will be salted for the winter. There is a great scarcity of fish now, however. During the two consecutive summers of my stay many of those who had no "curragh" of their own and who were dependent on the charity of "curragh"-owning neighbours only ate fish two or three times in a summer, whereas even those who had "curraghs" and went fishing every evening could only get enough fish for the family's needs after many hours fishing.

There is a serious protein deficiency in the Clare Island diet, but even more serious is the virtual absence of fruit and vegetables from the diet. The island gardens contain early potatoes, perhaps a few onions, a little lettuce, a few cabbage plants, and a plant or two of rhubarb, but that is all. There is no attempt to grow fruit and very little to grow vegetables.

The chief celebration foods which are eaten on feast days such as St. Patrick's day, Christmas and Easter, are roast meat, "porter cake," (a fruit loaf made with the addition of stout) and custard and jelly.

Probably the most noticeable change that has taken place in the appearance of the island is that which has occurred in the clothes worn by the islanders. As has been shown in the previous chapter, before the Famine, and even as recently as twenty or thirty years ago, the islanders used to wear clothes of their own manufacture. Up to twenty years ago none of the children used to wear, or possess, shoes, even to go to Mass, until they had left school, but used to go, "in their feet," the whole time, even when climbing the snow-covered hills in winter in search of sheep and lambs. Now everyone, even in the poorest families, has shoes, though many of the children and young girls go "in their feet," during the summer months, except for going to Mass.

Now, in general, the clothes worn by the islanders provide the evidence of modern influence which the cottage furnishings do not. Clothes are purchased, when necessary, on the mainland. but more usually the family is provided with clothes by emigrant kin in the British Isles or the United States. Gifts parcels containing clothes arrive regularly at most of the houses on the island, full of gaudy American wind cheaters and ties, nylon blouses and tight fitting suits, hats and childrens' clothes, and at an island dance almost everyone appears in such clothes and a casual observer might be forgiven for assuming that he had walked into an American square dance, instead of a dance on

a rapidly dying island on the west coast of Ireland.

There are two schools on the island, one at the east side and the other at the west, the teachers being an island woman with a teaching degree, and a young trainee from the mainland. Though both schools are attended by less than twenty pupils, they cannot be amalgamated into one, because it would then mean that some of the children would have to walk as much as eight miles every day, to attend school and to return home afterwards.

The schools are small single rooms, with a turf fire burning at one end, the walls decorated with large maps of Ireland, and coloured nature posters.

Every evening the children have homework and they are frequently helped with it by their parents who take a great interest in their childrens' progress. There is a general respect for scholarship on the island and a complete absence of the attitude that education is a waste of time, coupled with a high standard of literacy. The parental attitude towards education is summed up by the father who told me that his children spend the evening doing their homework on the kitchen table. "We don't have the radio on or anything while they're working," he said.

When the children have finished school in the evening they are often sent by their mothers to the Quay, "on a message," - that is, to fetch the groceries from the shop. They can often be seen wandering home, carrying a huge "message bag," trailing on the ground, filled with provisions, stopping on the way to deliver packets of cigarettes and groceries they have

THE QUAY.



The small sandy harbour is sheltered by the hill of Knocknaveen. The cargo and mail boats at the jetty have brought in supplies of drink for the inn, which is shown on the left.

been asked to buy for men working in the fields, or to collect a letter for posting from a woman who calls to them from her door, if she is too busy to go to the Quay herself, and has no children to go for her. Children are expected to make themselves generally useful in this respect, to childless people who have no one to run errands for them.

The Quay is the hub of island secular life as the Chapel is of its spiritual life. Because of the small size of the villages, and the lack of a village centre of any sort, or even of a general island centre for communal activities the focal point of the island on a weekday is the Quay. It is the centre for everyday intercourse between the islanders. In the late afternoon and evening, when the children come down from the hillside villages on messages, the men to order sacks of flour or to buy cigarettes, and later, at about eight, to start drinking at the pub, the islanders can be sure of meeting one or two people at the very least, and of exchanging gossip and news with them. In fact, because of the small population and the scattered settlement pattern, it is only by visiting the Quay in the late afternoon or evening that the islanders can be sure of making contact with people outside their own elementary family. Consequently the Quay, as a centre for meeting people, is of considerable importance to the social structure of the island.

The Quay consists of the small, shallow and sandy harbour, in which the mail boat and the other island boats

are anchored, and on whose beach an assortment of "curraghs" and ruined boats are drawn up. Behind, at the edge of the harbour on the road leading from the Quay into the interior of the island, stands the inn, a two storied house, in which chance visitors may stay, and in which is housed the post office and the combined shop and pub. This building, along with a large hay barn, a few sheds, the cottage inhabited by the island's doctor and his wife, and two other cottages, make up the village of the Quay.

The most exciting occurrence on the island is the departure and arrival of the mail boat, which comes into the harbour, bringing letters, parcels, and news from the mainland. All who leave the island and all who come to it do so by way of the Quay, and there is always the hope that a stranger might arrive in the mail boat. Parents encourage their children to notice every detail of the appearance of any such stranger and to glean every scrap of news they can about him, and the reason for his arrival, and about everything that they see happening at the Quay. They are very disappointed if a child sent on a message to the Quay returns without some item of gossip. "Did anyone come in with the post?" is a question usually put to the child on his return.

There is no mechanisation on the island, apart from the motor cycles owned by the lightkeepers, priest, doctor, and one of

the "big" farmers. There are one or two horses and carts which are only used for church going on Sundays. For everyday use transport is limited to horses and asses, which are used to carry "cleeves" (large paniers made of osiers, slung one each side of the animal's back), of turf from the bog, to carry manure to the fields, or to bring flour, potatoes and other heavy articles from the Quay. In the evening the men ride their horses or asses to the Quay to fetch flour in hundredweight sacks, or merely to spare themselves a walk of several miles, sitting astride, or more usually sideways on the hindquarters. Women do not ride either horses or asses, and say they would feel ridiculous if they did so. Though a young girl will occasionally ride an ass to the bog she would never ride this way to the Quay. The older women will walk everywhere, though they may ride a bicycle to the Quay. Whereas the roads in Inishturk are so rough and rocky that any bicycles used there were broken in a matter of days, the roads on Clare are level and smooth surfaced enough to permit the use of bicycles, the first of which was not introduced into the island until 1946. Now most households possess a bicycle which is used for long trips, such as going to the pub in the evening or visiting a neighbour in a distant village.

There is only one shop on the island now, and the fact that it is situated at the Quay helps to make the Quay the focal point of everyday social interaction between the islanders. Until thirty years ago the four shops mentioned by the Congested Districts Board were still in existence, but the rapid decline in population made custom scarce and the shop keepers gave up business and returned to farming. With the decline in the number of shops there has been a

corresponding decline in trade. There used to be a considerable amount of barter between the islanders and the shop-keepers. In 1895 it was reported of the islanders that, "If ready money is available, they buy in Louisburgh and Westport,"¹ because the island shopkeepers charged 2s per sack more for flour than in the mainland towns, and if credit was given 10-25 per cent was charged on six months credit. Consequently the poorer people used to exchange butter, sheep and poultry at the shop for groceries such as tea and sugar which they could not otherwise afford to pay for in cash.

The shop at the Quay was always the principal one, the others being smaller and having a more limited stock of goods, one being on the way to the chapel, the others in the more remote western villages. People at the west feel this lack of a shop near to them, since they have the longest distance, about six miles in all, to travel to the Quay shop. "The people at the east do their shopping in a different way from us," said a western woman. Because they are nearer to the shops they do not buy to last them for several days as the westerners do, but send their children in maybe several times a day to get groceries they need.

Because there is only one shop on the island, the shop-keeper, who combines this office with that of postmaster, innkeeper and farmer, has a monopoly of trade, and opens when, and if, he likes. Often the shop will not be open at all until the evening.

The shop is built on a typically Irish pattern - a spacious room with a counter running down each side, behind which are shelves on which the goods are stocked. The counter also serves as a bar at which the men who are at the Quay collecting seed potatoes, selling cattle or wool, or strangers from the mainland, such as

1. Congested District Board Reports, op. cit.

road inspectors, or sheep buyers, stand to drink and chat for a while before going home.

The shopkeeper orders his goods from a wholesale dealer in Westport and has an agreement with the owner of the cargo boat, the largest boat on the island, to transport the goods from Accony to the Quay, and also to bring over barrels of stout for the pub. The supply of goods and drink is nevertheless very irregular. There is frequently no stout, the islanders' principal drink, at the pub for several weeks, and the shop is invariably short of paraffin oil for the lamps, sugar, tea, flour and cigarettes. Apart from these necessities there is not a great choice of wares. Washing powders, tinned peas and beans, and occasionally corned beef or sardines, biscuits and chocolate. Whitewash brushes, wellington boots, and salt bacon hang from hooks on the ceiling, with sometimes a few mugs and a tin teapot.

At 5.30 the shop is usually at its busiest and business continues until the pub shuts, often well after midnight. There will generally be about three or four men standing in the shop drinking, usually in silence, in the afternoon, and one or two children lurking outside the door, or just inside it, sitting on sacks of flour, trying to pick up as much of the gossip going on as they can, to report it to their parents. Women very rarely come down to the Quay, preferring to send their children, but a few girls in their teens will probably be standing round the door waiting their turn to be served, talking in whispers, or just standing with downcast eyes. There is no gaiety apparent in the shoppers' demeanour. Even the drinking men rarely speak, except to nod a greeting to a new arrival entering the shop. There is a certain air of tension allied

to the natural island curiosity to see what others are buying and to collect news items.

The islanders are intensely secretive about their shopping, as they are about all their personal affairs. They prefer to shop when there are no other customers waiting, and will wait about, half in and half out of the door, until the first customer has finished his business and then sidle forward to hand over a written list of requirements, conducting their business with the shopkeeper in whispers and with the maximum of secrecy. They account for this secrecy themselves by saying that the shop used to be in a much smaller room, and could only hold one customer at a time, so the other customers had to wait their turn in the kitchen. One woman admits that shopping on the island was, "Like the confessional," people waiting till the shop was empty, if possible, before going in, and whispering their requirements in a low voice so no one but the shopkeeper could hear.

People prefer to buy goods on credit rather than pay for them at once and may owe anything from £4 - £30 to the shopkeeper, and pay off their debts when they feel inclined. I was not able to discover whether there is any feeling that to pay off the entire account is to signify the intention of terminating one's custom at the shop (Arensberg¹) but it is unlikely to be so where there is only the one shop. The shopkeeper charges more for every article sold than the mainland shopkeepers, to cover the cost of transport, but as far as I am aware, does not charge interest on credit. In houses where there are two couples, a young couple and old age pensioners, the old people have their own account, and when shopping

1. C. Arensberg. The Irish Countryman, New York, 1937, p. 173.

the children will bring two separate lists with them, one for their parents, and one for their grandparents, which will be put on two separate accounts.

Because of the frequent shortage of essential goods, overcharging, and most of all, because of the lack of variety, those who have "curraghs" of their own tend virtually to boycott the shop, especially during the summer months, when they will do their shopping in Curraun, on the mainland, four miles away, facing the north coast of the island, or in Achill, going there every few weeks to get supplies of flour, oil, drink, farm tools, and to stock up with provisions for the winter. Those who have not got "curraghs" do much of their shopping on the mainland when attending the monthly livestock fairs. Many people also rely on postal shopping, at a reliable store in Westport which specialises in dealings with the islanders and sends goods on credit, by return of post.

There is no doubt that the principal function of the shop at the moment is not so much to satisfy customers with the provision of goods as to provide opportunities, albeit very limited opportunities, for social interaction. The pleasure derived by the islanders from meeting friends, maybe having a drink with them, and exchanging gossip, is of far more importance to them than any shopping they might do. Though most people rely chiefly on postal or mainland shopping yet they make an excuse to go to the shop, or send their children there, to bring back news of what is going on at the Quay, who has come in "with the post", and who received letters and parcels. The shop serves as a mechanism for diffusing gossip to all parts of the island and provides an opportunity for social interaction between people who would not normally meet each other

during the day at work, as neighbours, or who do not belong to the same visiting groups. Even if the interlude in the shop may be unprofitable, those who have been shopping make the journey home together and may garner some fresh news on the way.

Because of this important social significance of the shop, as a mechanism for the diffusion of gossip, and for providing opportunities for social interaction, the shop can be regarded almost as the "plaza", or the village square, of Clare Island, and though its significance as a shop is negligible, nevertheless it fulfils a very vital need on the island.

In the winter, when the island is often cut off from the usual contact with the mainland, via the mail boat, for one or two weeks, the islanders tend to rely more on the shop and less on postal and mainland shopping.

Communications with the mainland are always uncertain, even in mid-summer, and this renders the island to a great extent self-sufficient, especially during the winter months. The whole point about communication with the mainland is its uncertainty. The wind may change in a moment, and all plans must be cancelled, perhaps for weeks, because the journey to the mainland is too dangerous. The island attitude to this situation is summed up in the answer of the mailboat owner to the English tourist, who was informed that the mail boat arrived at Accony at midday and was annoyed to be kept waiting for its arrival until 12.5. Outraged, he said to the boatman, "Do you realise you're five minutes late?" to which the boatman replied laconically, "You're lucky, we were a fortnight late once."

Contact with the mainland is maintained chiefly by a 20 foot

yawl, with a sail and inboard motor, which, weather permitting, collects and delivers mail at Accony four times a week. To cross to the mainland, a distance of over four miles, takes in fine weather, with the motor, about 40 minutes. In stormy weather when a sail is hoisted, the journey may take as long as $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Passage in the mail boat costs 5s. for a single journey, and once at Accony, five miles of rough cart track must be covered, on foot, bicycle, or in a hired car, cost of which is 10s. to reach the nearest village of Louisburgh, containing 500 people, several shops and a hotel. At Accony there is just a post office and a few small farms. There is no shop nearer than Louisburgh. The other island boats are two smaller yawls, and a large open fishing boat, rather bigger than the mail boat, also with a sail and motor, which is the cargo boat, used for transporting goods and livestock to and from the mainland. All these three boats are owned by two brothers, and one of their sons.

Apart from this the islanders have no boats but "currachs", the typical boat of the western islands, and west coast of Ireland, a light wooden framed, pointed-prowed canoe covered with tarred canvas. A "currach" is light enough to be carried on the backs of two or three men, and is the ideal craft in a rough sea with a heavy swell, as it is virtually watertight, and so light that it rides easily on the roughest sea, provided that the oarsmen are sufficiently skilled to prevent it capsizing. In a rough sea the islanders all say that there is nothing safer than a currach manned by three good men, but add "there are few good men now," because of the decline in population.

In cases of emergency, such as illness, the islanders charter

a "curragh" with an outboard motor from one of the several island-men who are willing to make the single journey to Accony for a cost of about 30s., or from a man who lives at Accony, and makes the journey, however bad and threatening the weather, for £1.

Most islanders are extremely nervous about making the crossing to the mainland in rough weather, because they cannot swim and are afraid of drowning instantly if the "curragh" capsizes. The women are especially fearful of the sea and will never get into a "curragh" unless it is really necessary.

Because of the expense incurred in making trips to the mainland, and the fear of drowning, the islanders tend to limit their visits to essential trips, to hospital, to get teeth fitted or extracted, to go to the monthly fairs and to obtain supplies of food for visits of emigrant kin from abroad.

Not only is the difficulty of getting off the island very considerable, but the difficulty of getting back may be even greater, and may be a cause of a great deal of unnecessary expenditure. Whereas, when a man is waiting to leave the island he can wait at home, when he is weatherbound on the mainland it is a different matter. His only alternatives are to stay at the hotel in Louisburgh, which is expensive, or to stay with relatives. He usually takes the latter course. In the words of one islander, "Being weather-bound in Louisburgh is a foretaste of purgatory before the heaven of Clare Island."

It is at times of crises, such as in cases of serious illness in bad weather, that the islanders find the difficulties of communication with the mainland irksome. Several times a sick person in need of hospital attention has died before he could be transported to hospital, because the sea was too rough for a crossing to be made.

The islanders can also maintain contact with the mainland by the radio-telephone in the post-office, which frequently breaks down and is so unreliable that it is rarely used for out-going personal calls, only for essential business, though relatives of the islanders will sometimes use it for in-going personal calls. One woman who had emigrated to the United States phoned up her island sister from California for Christmas.

In spite of the uncertainty of island communications and the fact that the islanders have a high degree of self-sufficiency when it becomes necessary, there has been a radical change in the way of life on the island since the turn of the century, and especially in the last thirty years. This change has been chiefly of an economic nature, but it has social implications as well, since the way of life has been affected by the changing economic pattern.

Increase in emigration has led to increased contact with, and knowledge of, the outside world, and to a desire for improvements and innovations in houses, diet and clothes. Since emigration began the islanders have been less cut off from the influence of the outside world and have become aware of standards of living higher than their own, and this awareness has increased their wants, which can no longer always be satisfied by the island shop. Consequently they prefer to try and satisfy their wants on the mainland, which increases still further their knowledge of life, and of the higher standard of living, there.

The way in which the economic life on the island has changed in the last fifty years will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE ISLAND ECONOMIC ORGANISATION

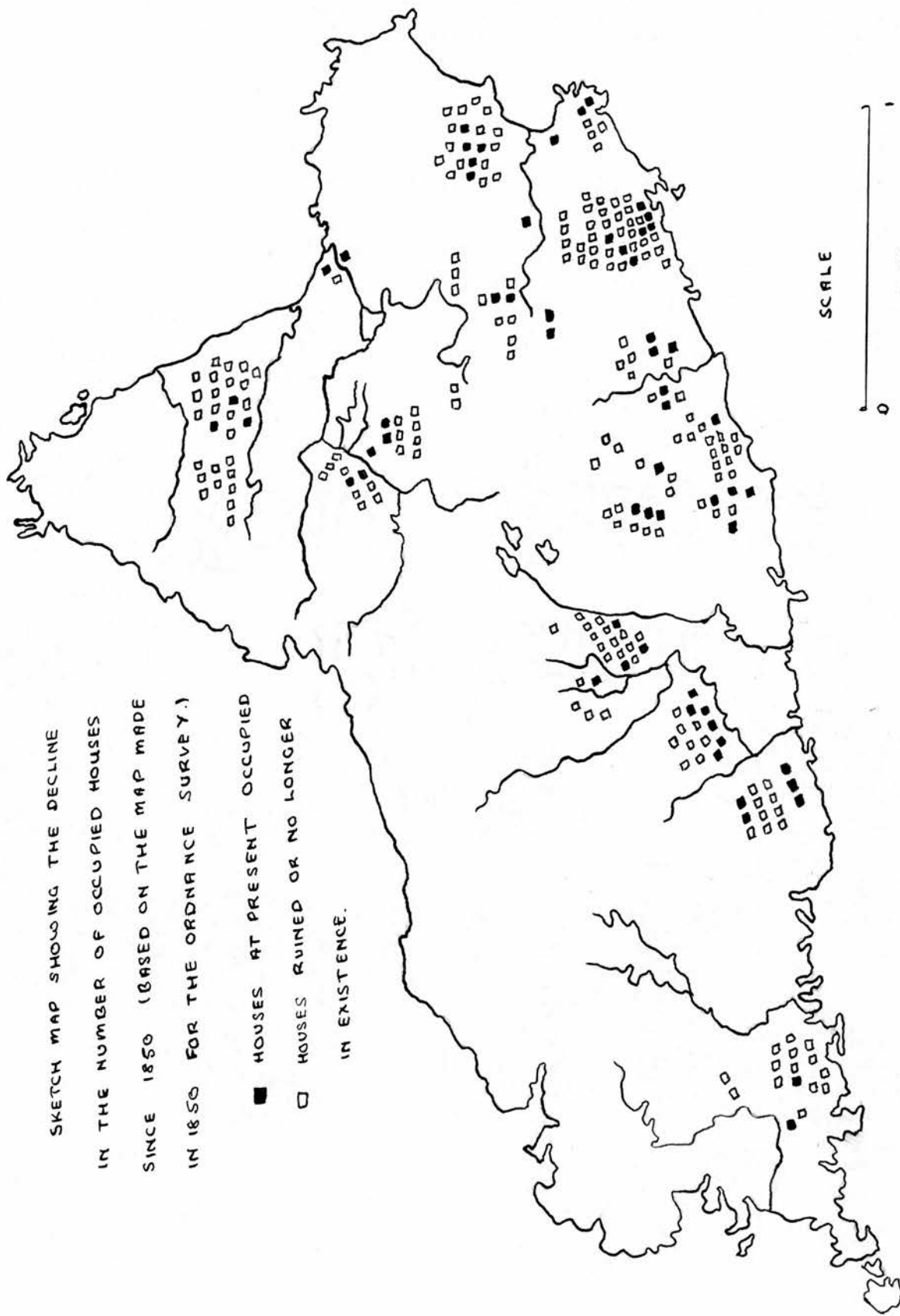
On Clare Island there is, as Arensberg and Kimball showed to be the case in County Clare, a considerable interdependence between the social organisation and the economic organisation. This is a characteristic of an economy at, or only slightly above, subsistence level, where the social life must necessarily be conditioned by economic factors. To understand fully the social organisation of any community with a small economic surplus, and an economy not far removed from subsistence level, the social organisation must be examined against the background of the economic system, upon which it is so directly dependent. This interdependence between the social and economic organisation is especially significant on Clare Island.

The economic organisation of Clare has undergone a considerable change since its purchase by the Congested Districts Board at the end of the nineteenth century. This change has been brought about by the rapid decline in population, due to the effects of the Famine, and to emigration. The most important change that has taken place is in the system of agriculture; secondary effects are the decline in industries and in the number of specialist craftsmen on the island.

During Famine times, because of the acute land shortage, all land from which even the most meagre crop could be extracted was tilled. Potatoes were grown in the bogland, and high up on the slopes of the hills. At the time of potato planting today the small fields of freshly dug land contrast with the great stretches

SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE DECLINE
IN THE NUMBER OF OCCUPIED HOUSES
SINCE 1850 (BASED ON THE MAP MADE
IN 1850 FOR THE ORDNANCE SURVEY.)

■ HOUSES AT PRESENT OCCUPIED
□ HOUSES RUINED OR NO LONGER
IN EXISTENCE.



of land, once cultivated, and still bearing traces of deep potato ridges, which extend high into the hills and afford one of the clearest indications of the way in which the man-power of the island has declined since the beginning of the present century.

Before the Famine years the islanders concentrated chiefly on tillage, growing oats and potatoes for their own needs and growing wheat as a cash crop, which they exported to England in order to obtain money to pay the rent for the holdings. They also reared cattle, a few sheep, pigs and poultry for the mainland market.

The depopulation of the island has led to the desertion of the majority of the island farms. In 1840 a map made by the Ordnance Survey shows 240 inhabited farms, whereas today, little more than 100 years later, there are only 61 inhabited farms. The result of this is that the farmer today has much more land available for tillage than his predecessors, and also has a greater share of the common grazing. Recently, however, tillage has become of much less importance. The islanders have abandoned much of the pretence of being agriculturalists, changing from a predominantly agricultural system in which tillage was the most important activity, to mixed farming with a strong bias towards pastoralism. This is in part an ecological adjustment to the decline in population, which has made more meadow and commonage available to those who remain, but it is also in part a response to the shortage of male labour caused by the increase in emigration since the turn of the century.

Though the islanders still grow potatoes and oats these are purely to satisfy the needs of their families and their stock.

They do not, because owing to the shortage of labour they cannot, attempt to grow any cash crops. The need to do so has lessened with the absence of demand for rent. Their income is derived chiefly from the sale of livestock rather than from agricultural activities. The change from arable farming to a predominantly pastoral system has been accompanied by a decline in industry, due, as is also the decline in the number of specialists on the island, to depopulation. The technological retrogression of the island culture since the time of the Famine has been very marked. In 1845 the working male population was equal to more than the entire present population of 223, and those men who were not required for full time work on the land devoted their time to industry. The Parliamentary Gazeteer of 1845 reports of the island, "Much grain is shipped for Westport: large quantities of sea manure are landed and about 340 men and boys divide their cares between farming and the fisheries."

At the time of the survey made by the Congested Districts Board there were four shops on the island, and a considerable amount of intra-island trade was carried on in the form of barter between farmers and shopkeepers, and the sale of home produce to shopkeepers. With the decline in the number of shops this trade has ceased.

As on most of the western islands, the Clare Islanders used to make "kelp", a process involving the gathering, drying, and burning, in specially constructed kilns, of large seaweed stalks. These were melted into solid blocks of a thick glue-like substance which mainland buyers purchased at £4 per ton to convert into iodine. Until 14 years ago "kelp" was made on the island, two men

taking from three to four weeks to make a ton, and about thirty tons were sold every year.. "Carragheen" seaweed was also gathered and sold to mainland buyers.

In 1911 the fishing industry established by the Congested Districts Board was still flourishing, the islanders maintaining two large fishing boats, each manned by a crew of eight, and the herring and mackerel caught were gutted and salted at a station built by the Board at the Quay. Twenty years ago, when the increase in emigration had depleted the island of much of its man-power and when fish became scarce in the waters surrounding the island, the fishing industry died out.

Only twenty years ago too, the women used to knit socks and gloves to sell on the mainland, one woman acting as an agent for mainland buyers, teaching island girls to knit, providing them with wool and selling the garments they produced. Flax was grown and woven into linen and wheat was grown as a cash crop, whereas today the only activity, apart from farming, in which the islanders engage, is lobster fishing.

At the beginning of the century there were two weavers on the island, as well as tailors, carpenters, shop-keepers and smiths, all working full time, whereas any specialisation on the island today must necessarily be on a part time basis, because the men have little time to spare from their primary occupation of farming. With the decline in population too, a full time specialist, unless he combined his activities with farming, would not find enough custom to provide him with a living. It is a question of lack of time and of custom, rather than lack of ability, which leads to the absence of full time specialists on the island. In this lack Clare

Island shows a characteristic of a subsistence economy in having no full time specialists apart from the priest and salaried non-islanders such as the doctor, lightkeeper and teachers.

Apart from these people there are only three islandmen who do not regard farming as their principal means of livelihood, with all other activities carried on merely as a sideline, the innkeeper, and the owners of the mail and cargo boats. The mail boat owner fetches the mail from the mainland four times a week in favourable weather, and is also employed by the Irish Lights Commission to ferry the lightkeepers to and from the mainland, and to transport oil and supplies from Accony to the lighthouse. He thus receives two salaries in addition to what he makes from occasional passenger fares and from farming.

The owner of the cargo boat brings supplies to the shop and pub from Accony, ferries livestock across to the monthly fairs, and brings the farmers back afterwards. He also has the contract to make the eighteen mile journey to and from the neighbouring island of Inishturk with the priest every month, when the priest goes there to say Mass.

The two postmen, like one of the few craftsmen left, the island smith, combine their jobs with farming their land. The demand for the smith's services is very small now, his most regular customer being one of the postmen, whose horse needs shoeing every six weeks. There are four carpenters on the island, all of whom do part time work for people during the slack winter months when no farming can be done, and one of whom also makes "currachs". One of these carpenters is the only islander to have installed running water in his house, where his taps, sink and flush lavatory are a

source of considerable envy, yet he has not exploited his skill by offering to improve other houses in this way, because he runs his farm on his own, without any help, and has little time for carpentry.

The only women who make any attempt to supplement their income are the woman who keeps house for the priest, another who learnt dressmaking in England and occasionally makes clothes for a small fee, and the woman who bakes bread for the school.

There is an almost total absence of hired labour on the island because of the tendency of the younger men to emigrate. Labour is so scarce that boys are taken away from school as soon as they reach leaving age (fourteen) and put to work on the farm by their fathers, even if they show promise of enough intelligence to benefit from secondary education on the mainland. With such a shortage of man power, where there is an average of one able-bodied man under sixty to a house, and five houses where there is no male labour at all, it is almost impossible for a man who needs help on his farm to hire an assistant. A hired man, whatever his age, expects to be paid £1 per day and given three good meals, and not even a 15 year old boy will consent to work for less. The only people who are available for casual labour at the busiest seasons of the year, such as harvesting and potato planting, are the boys who have just left school, and whose fathers permit them to do one or two days work for farmers with large holdings who need their help, a man with eight young children who has not much land of his own, and is glad of the extra money, and two men with small families and very small holdings.

In general people only work for each other as a favour, in

return for a favour, or in co-operation. For instance a young man wanted to buy a "curragh" from an old man who had no further use for it, but the old man had no one to cut turf for him, and said that he would give the younger man the "curragh" provided that he would spend two days at the bog cutting turf for him, which the younger man agreed to do.

Consequently, apart from gratuitous help from kin and neighbours, the island farmer must rely purely on the labour resources of his own family. In general the main work on the farm is done by the head of the house with the help of any other male relatives living in the house. Generally speaking the island farm is managed by one capable man with the help of a younger, or weaker, kinsman, or an aged father.

At the busy time of the year the women spare a few days from their household tasks to help the men in the fields. They are allotted the lighter jobs such as the spreading of manure on the fields, and tying the oats into sheaves. The heavier work such as digging the potato ridges is invariably left to the man. The women also help to "save" the turf, which the men have cut, by piling it into small heaps to dry before it is stacked, and transporting it to the stack, where it is laid in position by the men. They are also responsible for whatever vegetables are grown in the "garden", usually just a few cabbages, lettuces and onions.

Children under the age of fourteen are not expected to give their fathers much help on the land and very rarely do so. Many fathers take the view that their children are too young, the work too hard, and that they might as well play while they can. However, by watching their fathers working, children are able to take over

and do the work themselves in an emergency. One boy of thirteen, the eldest of a family of seven, when his father fell ill at harvest time, and had no other man to help him, cut all the oats himself, and tied and stooked them without any help, a tiring job for a full grown man.

Tuke¹ writes in 1886, "Twenty acres of land is, by a sort of common consent, taken as the minimum quantity upon which a family can obtain a decent livelihood in the west." The majority of the island farms are larger than this. When the Congested Districts Board "striped" the island farms, dividing up the "rundale" holdings, held in common by a number of tenants, making them into self-contained holdings, each man received an amount of land proportionate to the rent he was then paying. Generally speaking the island farms are small, ranging from 13-60 acres in size, the average size being about thirty five acres. There are three large farms, two at the north of the island, both of two hundred and fifty acres, and one of a hundred and fifty acres at the west. In addition to his own land, a large proportion of which is meadow grazing, every farmer has the right to graze an unlimited number of cattle and sheep on the commonage, which is separated from the arable land and meadow grazing by the wall built by the Congested Districts Board.

With the exception of a few patches of "kind" land in the west and in the northern valleys, the soil is poor and hard to work. It is shallow, full of stones and rocks, and the fields are small and uneven, so the only tool in general use in the preparation of the oat and potato fields is the spade, since a plough could not

1. J.H. Tuke. Achill and The West of Ireland. Dublin 1886.

be used on such uneven, rocky ground. (Two small, one-horse ploughs were used successfully last year by farmers who are fortunate in having level, stone free land near the Quay.)

The islanders frequently grumble over the fact that it takes weeks to do with the spade what could be done in a few hours with a tractor, saying that the mainlander can do his tillage in a day or two with a tractor, and spend the rest of the season earning money fishing, or working with the Land Commission, "But here we spend from the beginning of March to the first of June hammering away at the land- and we have only one or two acres to show for it after all that work."

¹
Charles Browne writes in 1896, "The methods of farming are of the most primitive description. While the crops were down the sheep and cattle of the neighbours had to be kept away from them by some of the family being constantly on the watch with dogs to drive them away and send them back to the mountain grazing again." This situation was caused by the lack of proper fences, and it still exists today, partly because of the absence of wood on the island, and the expense of buying fencing wire. At the east and north of the island, where there is a considerable amount of stone, walls are built, but on the southern side, where the houses are closer together, and where there is less stone, the only fences are mud banks, sometimes topped with a layer of stones, or a piece of barbed wire, and it is a major task for the farmer to keep his neighbour's cattle, and his own, from damaging his crops.

1. Charles Browne. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 1898, Vol. V.

The Clare Island farmer derives most of his cash income from the sale of sheep, cattle and wool, and consequently he tends to attach more importance to the rearing of livestock than to tillage. He will have about two or three milch cows, two or three yearlings, and a corresponding number of calves which he will keep over the winter and sell as yearlings the following year. He is limited in the number of cattle he keeps by the amount of grazing land he has, and also by the expense of feeding the cattle in winter when they must be kept indoors. The two "big" farmers at the north have more grazing, and the north side of the island is sheltered enough to permit the cattle to remain outside in winter, so they are able to keep a slightly larger number of cattle, selling about nine yearlings each year instead of two or three.

The purchase of a cow represents a major outlay for the island farmer, since a full grown milch cow costs between £40-£50. There is little intra-island trade in cattle, because, although the islanders prefer to buy island cattle, they also prefer to sell their own cattle to mainland buyers, who pay higher prices than fellow islanders. Because of the expense incurred in transporting cattle to the mainland fairs, perhaps having to sell them at a loss rather than to bring them back again, and running the risk of being weatherbound on the mainland for several days after the fair, in recent years the island farmers have preferred to wait for mainland buyers to come to the island to buy their cattle, rather than take them to the mainland themselves.

It is the custom when selling cattle on the island, or on the mainland, to have a friend with you to help you "make a bargain." When a farmer refuses to accept less than £50 for his cow, and the buyer refuses to offer more than £40, a friend of the seller, or any fellow islander who happens to be near, will suggest that the buyer and seller split the difference, and make it £45, thus helping to clinch the deal. Transactions between islanders and mainlanders rarely take place without an onlooker helping to "make a bargain."

The primary source of income is derived from the sale of sheep. It is significant that a man is judged, not by the number of cattle he owns, but by the number of sheep. "They're not poor," said one woman of her neighbours, "did you see all those sheep up on the mountain? They're all theirs." The number of sheep that a man possesses is conditioned partly by the extent and quality of his grazing, and partly, since to keep a large flock of sheep involves a considerable amount of extra work at the lambing season, and at shearing and dipping, by whether he has any assistance on the farm. A man who farms alone will not have time to keep a large flock. The average farmer owns a ram, and about sixty sheep, and will sell about twenty a year. The two "big" farmers have the largest flocks, one owning two hundred and fifty sheep, and five of the western farmers, who also have good grazing land, have about a hundred and twenty sheep each. Some of the poorer families on the southern side of the island have only about thirty five sheep altogether, and three families have no sheep at all.

Sheep, like cattle, are not usually taken to the mainland fairs, but sold to buyers visiting the island. Last year three hundred island sheep were sold to mainland buyers. Still more important than the sale of sheep is the sale of wool. At the beginning of July the islanders have finished shearing their sheep, stuff their fleeces into large sacks, and carry them down to the Quay on asses, where the wool buyers weigh the fleeces, and they are sold by the pound. In 1957 the price paid for wool was three and sixpence per pound, the average weight sold by each farmer being about three hundredweight, and the average price received being about £60, though several farmers with large flocks of sheep sold over £100 worth of wool. "It's the only money we get that's easy come by," said one farmer's wife.

Only three farmers have pigs and these are reared solely for home consumption, as are geese and hens. There is no rearing of pigs or poultry for the mainland market as there used to be fifty years ago. Most farmers have an ass or a horse which they use for fetching turf, carrying manure, and transporting goods from the Quay to the house.

Not more than three acres of land are usually cultivated by any farmer, including the two "big" farmers, who use most of their land for sheep rearing. The most important crop is potatoes, which for nine or ten months of the year provide the island family with their staple food. Oats and hay will also be grown as winter feed for cattle. Potatoes and oats are grown in rotation, oats alternating every second year with potatoes. In general a piece of land is tilled for six to eight years and allowed to lie fallow for the same period, but in practice the period of cultivation varies

POTATO FIELDS.



The so-called "lazy beds", showing the "old style" trenches, almost two foot deep, contoured to prevent too rapid drainage on sloping land where the soil is shallow.

These fields have been dug and made ready for planting by a man of eighty.

with the quality of the land. In the village of Gurteen, one of the poorest areas of land on the island, the land is tilled for two years, a crop of oats following one of potatoes, and is then allowed to lie fallow for four to six years. On some of the richer land farmers say that they have been sowing oats and potatoes in rotation for as long as twenty years without allowing the land to lie fallow. In addition to farm manure and artificial fertilisers seaweed or "wrack", which was for several hundreds of years the only manure used on the island, is still used, especially by the seaboard farmers. As soon as the wrack is washed up on the strand by the high spring tides the men rush down to collect it. The whole strand is covered to a depth of several feet by brown and slippery wrack, which is loaded into cleaves and carried on the backs of horses or asses, to the hay fields where it is spread evenly over the ground. Sometimes it is piled on the strand above the high water mark to dry, before being transported to the fields.

Potatoes are grown in deeply trenched beds to facilitate drainage and the preparation of the fields requires a great deal of work. As a result the fields tend to be small, the average field being about 400 yards square. In addition to the main crop a few early potatoes are grown in the "garden", a small, well fertilised bed adjacent to the house.

The farming year falls into two clearly defined periods, the slack period, which begins with the end of the potato harvest in October and continues until the lambing season in February, and the active period, from February until mid-October.

During the slack period the days are short, dark, wet and windy and the family is virtually confined to the house. Winter is the great time for visiting, reading, making lobster pots, or

cleaves, for the coming season, and it is the time of year when there is a great deal of social interaction. Almost every evening the men go out visiting, and the women too, when they have the opportunity, whereas in the spring and summer, when the men work in the fields until the last ray of light has gone, visiting is at a minimum.

At the end of February the weather starts to improve and the days to lengthen, the farmers are pre-occupied with lambing and with the preparation of the fields for planting. The "seeds" (potatoes and oats) purchased from the Department of Agriculture, arrive at the end of March, and are collected from the Quay. By the middle of April most of the planting and sowing has been done, and the farmer has time to attend to the upkeep of the farm, mending fences, or stone walls, deepening ditches, and in general improving the appearance of his farm.

At the end of May the men take a few days off from the fields to whitewash and thatch their houses and to cut turf for the winter, while the women clean out the house, paint or whitewash the interior and perhaps take a trip of a few days to the mainland before activity starts up again at harvest time.

The cost of importing coal from the mainland is prohibitive and since there is no wood on the island the islanders depend entirely on turf for cooking and heating, and a shortage of turf is as serious as a shortage of food. The only person who imports coal is the innkeeper, who has no one to cut turf for him.

In having turf deposits the islanders have a great advantage over the inhabitants of some of the other western islands such as the Aran Islands and the island of Lettermullen off the Galway coast,

where there is no turf and every piece must be imported and paid for, from the island of Garumna and the mainland areas of Connemara. The fact that the Clare Islanders incur no expense in cooking and heating is an important factor in the island economy.

In some areas, notably the east and north, people are fortunate in being near to their bogs, but people on the road between the Quay and the Chapel are situated in a very inconvenient position and must travel as much as six miles to and from their bogs.

A peculiarity of the islanders is their reluctance to make a stack of turf near the house so that they have a reserve supply in winter. Browne¹, talking of the character of the islanders of Mason and Mweenish, in Galway, says, "It is said to be characteristic of them that they would rather fetch a creel of turf three miles every day than go to the labour of building a stack of it near the house." It is exactly the same with the Clare Islanders today. The only islander who has a stack of turf by his house is a man whose bog is only thirty yards from the house. All the rest have a "turf house," a small shed which can hold no more than one load of turf, the full of two cleeves carried by horse or an ass, which is the average family's daily consumption of turf. Every day, winter and summer, often in howling gales, snow storms, or driving rain, somebody from the house must struggle up the several miles of uphill, stony road to the bog to bring down a load of turf, and often people waiting for the children to return from school and fetch the turf have not even enough in reserve to boil a kettle. In winter a large fire round which to sit during the long wet days spent in

1. Charles Browne. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 1900, Vol. VI.

TURF CUTTINGS.



"Slane" turf, so called because it is cut with a long bladed spade known as a slane, drying before being stacked into clamps (at centre and right of the picture)

the house, visiting and card playing, is regarded as an essential part of life. "In winter the fire is the only comfort we have" and turf cutting is regarded as an extremely important pursuit, "because no matter what you've got you can do nothing without a fire."

During the summer months turf cutting progresses steadily in conjunction with the normal farming activities of weeding and spraying the potatoes, shearing and dipping the sheep, and harvesting. The hay harvest begins in June, followed by the oat harvest, and culminating in the potato harvest in October.

Because of the decline in the population of the island, the Clare Island family has changed from being a self-sufficient unit of production, worked by a man and his sons, to being a unit dependent on kin and neighbours for the loan of both labour and equipment, at many stages of the farming year. When there is only one able bodied man on the farm, as is often the case, he will require the help of his kin and neighbours at all stages of the work where another man is needed, such as harrowing, sheep shearing and building the hay rick. There is much more co-operation between farmers at planting time than at harvest time because women and children are more able to help with the lighter work of harvesting than with the heavy work involved in planting and sowing.

An interesting factor in Clare Island farming is the remarkable synchronisation of farming activities. It is the invariable rule that if any operation such as potato spraying, sheep dipping or cutting oats is being done on one farm, that the same operation

will be being carried out at the same time on 90 per cent of the other farms. It is as if there has been a special agreement among the farmers to dip their sheep on June 16th, or to spray potatoes on July 2nd. In fact, of course, there has been no such formal agreement. The reason for the apparent consensus of opinion among the island farmers as to when a certain job should be carried out is the influence of the church groups on farming life. These are the groups of men who meet informally at the gates of the churchyard, and at the entrance to the church before and after mass. These groups act as a sort of farm forum at which farming activities are discussed, opinions and views exchanged on new methods of farming and innovations, advice asked for by the younger man, and proffered by the older ones. For instance a farmer who has ordered a supply of a new anti-maggot sheep dip will promise to give some to a friend of his who expresses interest in it. It is here that many informal business deals between the islanders, such as the sale of a cow, or a ram, are clinched, and it is here that the farmers of a particular region gather to discuss farming operations and to decide when is the right time to start planting or shearing, or any other activities. The advice of the older, more experienced men is sought and their opinions on such important matters listened to with respect. It is in this way that the tradition of Clare Island farming is handed on from one generation to the next. The older men express views on what they intend to do - one will say, "It'll be time enough to start shearing at the end of the month," and if the others agree they will say so, and if

they disagree a discussion will ensue. Eventually it is agreed that sheep shearing, for example, should begin at the end of the month, and everyone waits until then to start shearing, and so it is with every farming activity.

It is in this way that the activities of the individual Clare Island farmer synchronise so remarkably with the activities not only of his neighbours, but of the island farmers as a whole. It is, for instance, a rare occurrence to find a man spraying his potatoes a week after everyone else has finished. He is most likely to do so on the same day as everyone else, or at most one or two days later, according to the time tacitly agreed on by the older and more experienced farmers at the Sunday meeting.

The increased contact with the mainland and with other parts of the world through emigration, and through the return of emigrants to the island in recent years, might be expected to have caused an increase in the "wants" of the islanders, as they became aware of standards of living higher than their own, with an increased effort on their part, to earn enough money to satisfy these wants. This is not in fact the case.

The chief sources of income are derived from the sale of cattle, sheep and wool, but another important source of income is remittances, in either cash or kind, from relatives overseas, in the British Isles or the States. Most families receive the majority of their clothes from this source, in addition to many items of household equipment such as curtain material, and even such things as soap flakes, which obviates a considerable amount of expenditure on these essential items. "Our aunts in England are very good, they always send us parcels, we hardly ever have to buy clothes," says a fourteen year old girl, eldest of a family

of six.

Even families who do not receive parcels regularly receive gifts of money at Christmas, often only a few dollars, but since the average person has several siblings who have emigrated, all of whom are likely to send him gifts of money, the total amount received is considerable. One man is sent fifteen pounds every Christmas by his sister in Chicago, while another man, who has been in Chicago twenty years, never fails to send his sister one or two pounds every Christmas. A man whose son is in the U.S. army, receives half his pay regularly every month.

Consequently emigration has a twofold effect on the economy. While on the one hand it has depleted the island of most of its male labour force and has led to its industrial and technological retrogression, and has resulted in the decline of the economic self-sufficiency of the family, yet at the same time the economic assistance given to the remaining islanders by emigrant kin means that they are helped to maintain their standard of living in the face of apparent economic retrogression.

There are also subsidiary sources of income which families in poor circumstances, or those who have enough male labour to enable one man to participate in economic activities other than those of a purely subsistence nature, may engage in. The most important and remunerative of these is lobster fishing, which however demands a certain amount of initial capital outlay, and also makes a considerable demand on the farmer's time. The lobster fisher must first have a "curragh" built by one of the island carpenters, who will take about six days to make it and charge the usual labour rate of £1 per day, making no extra charge for his

specialised work. The tar, wood and canvas for the "curragh" will cost about sixteen pounds, the outboard motor a further twenty, in addition to the cost of pots, ropes and corks which will cost another twenty pounds.

Only twenty islanders engage in lobster fishing, a crew of two in each "curragh", and the profits from the sale of the lobsters to French buyers in Achill during the short eight or ten week season, from mid June to August, are shared equally between the two men, regardless of who owns the boat. Experienced fishermen may make a profit of as much as two hundred pounds each in a season, but in spite of this lobster fishing is a very risky venture which can result in the damage to, or loss of, a great deal of capital equipment. Two days of wild storms in July 1957 resulted in one "curragh" being swept out to sea, another "curragh", belonging to two young cousins who had only started fishing that year, being smashed in the harbour, and in the loss of a great many pots. This risk of severe financial loss, coupled with the necessity of a capital outlay of at least sixty pounds, is a severe deterrent to potential lobster fishers.

Another subsidiary source of income is the collection of winkles sold to mainland buyers at £1 per hundredweight. All the islanders, with the exception of the innkeeper, mail boat owner and the two big farmers, receive the dole, a sum of 18s. per week, from October to February, when they are not working on their land, and three farmers who have very small holdings of thirteen acres, receive dole all the year round. Dole recipients are obliged to help on such work as resurfacing the island roads for the County Council in winter months.

All those over seventy receive the old age pension and parents

receive family allowances of five shillings per week for all children under sixteen, except the eldest child.

Whereas in Achill the farms are too small to enable families to earn enough money unless the majority of the men go to England or Scotland annually as migratory labourers, on Clare the farms are big enough to enable their occupants to live satisfactorily on what they produce, and the Clare Islanders do not favour migratory labour. If they leave the island at all they will leave it for a period of several years and then come back again only when they intend to settle there permanently.

On Achill too there is a different attitude towards the tourist trade, probably because Achill is more accessible to tourists and receives more visitors than Clare, having modern attractions such as cinemas and dance halls, which Clare cannot offer. Whereas the Clare Islanders are indifferent to tourists, and a weatherbound stranger on the island is hard put to it to get a bed for the night, the Achill Islanders go to the other extreme, renting their own cottages to tourists for the summer months and moving into old cottages or out-houses during the tourist season.

Clothes are provided on Clare Island chiefly by gifts from emigrant kin, farm machinery is of the simplest because the nature of the terrain prohibits the use of more complicated equipment, turf is obtained without cost for cooking and heating, and consequently the expenditure of the islanders is not great. The chief item of expenditure is materials for the upkeep of the house, paint, white wash and distemper. Other expenses are limited to the purchase of household equipment such as milk pails, fittings for the Tilley lamp, ovens for baking, costing thirty shillings,

THE PREPARATION OF AN OAT FIELD.



Farm manure is carried to the field in cleaves, unloaded from the horse, or ass, and spread evenly over the field before the oats are sown. Note the small size of the field, and the way in which digging cannot remove the potato ridges entirely.

delf, and occasionally a new butter churn. Most families also need to buy a few clothes to supplement those sent by kin; heavy oilskins and Sunday suits for the men, and shoes, which wear out rapidly because of the rough surface of the roads.

Flour is the most expensive of the provisions needed by the household. A hundredweight sack costs £2.18.6d. In the winter when the men are not working on the land and have less of an appetite a sack will last the average family two weeks but in the Spring and Summer it may last as little as a week if the family are "big eaters". Apart from flour the chief items of foodstuffs purchased are tea, sugar, baking soda, salt, porridge oats and very occasionally meat, in addition to drink, tobacco and paraffin oil for the Tilley lamp.

Farming expenses are limited to bull fees at 7s 6d. per time, the cost of seed potatoes and oats, of transporting animals to the mainland fairs, and of buying winter feed for the milch cows and calves, which will amount to about twenty four pounds.

Ceremonial expenses absorb a considerable proportion of a farmer's income. He is expected to give at least ten shillings at both the Christmas and Easter collections for the priest and to provide him with four loads of turf per year, or the equivalent in money, 24s. There is also a tax called the "oat money", a relic of the days when the priest, who now owns a motor cycle, demanded this tax to keep his horse fed with oats, ready for urgent calls. This amounts to three and six annually. Each family pays six shillings every year to cover the cost, along with contributions from Inishturk, of the boat which takes the priest to say mass on Inishturk. In addition to this every three or four years people

are expected to hold the "station" in their house, which results in an expense of about ten pounds.

The lack of a well-stocked shop limits the expenditure of the islanders considerably, since for anything except the ordinary household requirements they must either order by post or wait until they go out to the mainland to make their purchases. "If you had all the money in the world you couldn't buy the things you wanted here," said one woman. Though contact with the outside world has increased rapidly in the past thirty years, and with the increase in ready cash, and the decline in the barter system it has become more possible for the islanders to satisfy new wants, the tendency is still for the average family's expenditure to be limited to the traditional furnishings and household equipment.

A group of men discussing the average income level on the island calculated it, on the basis of the profits gained from the sale of stock and wool, to be a net profit of £100 per annum. This does not include money gained from subsidiary activities such as lobster fishing, or from the dole or pension. Probably the highest income on the island is that of one of the big farmers who earns an income of about seven hundred pounds a year, chiefly through lobster fishing. The low income level on the island is shown by the fact that most people regard the priest as being in comfortable circumstances, because, apart from the Easter and Christmas collections, which amount to about £60 in all, he has an income of £120 per annum. Islanders say that he should easily be able to live on that income alone, without the money received from collections- "It's a lot here," they say.

Though the islanders have a low level of income their needs are fewer than they would be on the mainland, and because of the lack of a well-stocked shop they have less opportunities to spend money. The simple standards of comfort, and the fact that most of the food is home produced, means that there is very little poverty. There is a remarkable lack of differentiation in the patterns of consumption from house to house. There is no indication on entering the house reputed to be the poorest, and that reputed to be the richest, of any difference in income level, in either the appearance of the interior of the house, or in the food consumed. The fact that people at the highest income level live in virtually the same way as people at the lowest income level seems to indicate that a comfortable standard of living can be achieved by the islanders on an income of about £100 per annum, and that, even if a farmer earns more than this, there are few ways in which this additional money can be used to make life more comfortable on the island. This is probably why the islanders are not unduly concerned with the accumulation of money beyond the average income level.

CHAPTER 5.

THE ISLAND AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD.1.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MAINLAND AND NEIGHBOURING ISLANDS.

It is usual, in communities in which a "nativistic movement" is taking place, as it is at present in Clare Island, for the community in question to be in contact with some other society at a more advanced level of development. The relationship the community has with this society may be an amicable one, or it may be that of conqueror and conquered. In the first case the less advanced society is most likely to attempt to attain a higher level of development by adopting, as far as is possible, the way of life of the more advanced society.

In the second case, a situation where the less advanced society is being oppressed or absorbed by the more advanced, its members are likely to resent the change that is taking place in their old way of life, and to take active steps to prevent the more powerful society from changing their culture. The attempts they make to prevent this may result in a "nativistic movement," the purpose of which is to maintain, or restore, the old way of life, while maintaining, or restoring, social solidarity.

The more advanced society tries to impose its culture on the less advanced, which may be forced to accept the situation involuntarily, though it can choose whether to accept the values of the more advanced society, wholly, partially, or to reject them completely, usually accompanying this last reaction with a strong "nativistic movement," to ensure the survival of its own values.

Clare Island, in spite of its geographically isolated position,

was involved in such a situation of involuntary contact with a more powerful and more developed society for several centuries. Before the Congested Districts Board purchased the island in 1895 the islanders were dominated by a succession of landlords who held their rights to the island from the British Government. Many islanders were evicted from their homes, because they could not pay the exorbitant rates demanded by the landlords, and the treatment they received from these landlords and their agents led to a strong anti-British feeling, which is only now beginning to disappear. Such contact between the British Government and the islanders was of an involuntary and unfavourable nature.

The situation on the island today is completely reversed in that culture contact is no longer imposed upon the islanders from without, but is sought out by them voluntarily. The islanders achieve contact with, and knowledge of, the outside world, not only with the mainland, but, through emigration, with the British Isles and the United States. Contact with the outside world, through emigration, is of two kinds, first hand contact of a voluntary nature, which the islanders achieve by emigrating, and second-hand experience of other cultures, gained by islanders who have never left the island, yet who meet others who have returned from overseas, either permanently, or on holiday.

The increase in emigration, especially to the British Isles, since the Famine, and the subsequent increase in knowledge of the outside world, has replaced the contact which was provided, until a few years ago, by the visits to the island of tourists from the mainland and the British Isles. In recent years the island has

declined in popularity as a tourist resort, partly because of competition from Achill Island, which is now joined to the mainland by a narrow bridge, and is consequently easier of access than Clare, and partly because accommodation on the island, with the decline of the innkeeper's willingness to accommodate tourists, has become extremely difficult to obtain, since, unlike the Achill Islanders, the people of Clare are not willing to take tourists as boarders in the summer months. The only people who come to the island now are a very occasional visitor to the inn, emigrants returning to visit their kin, and tourists from Achill who visit Clare on day trips.

Nevertheless the island scene has undergone a radical change in the last twenty years. The continual increase in emigration, the introduction of radios into nearly every island home, the acquisition of motors for the boats, which facilitates communication with the mainland, coupled with the higher prices offered for live-stock and wool, which results in a more ready supply of cash for the island farmer, have all been contributory factors in bringing about this change. Not only have such factors contrived to raise the standard of living on the island considerably, but at the same time they have helped to make the islanders aware of standards of living higher than their own by increasing their first-hand knowledge of the mainland.

One islander said that twenty years ago, when he was a boy, neither he nor his seven siblings had ever left the island, even to go to a fair on the mainland in Louisburgh, until they emigrated to England or America, because there was no money to spare for such trips. Now, he says, young islanders think nothing of making pleasure trips to the mainland, to watch football matches, to see curragh races, or

just to go shopping. Consequently they are much more aware of what is going on in the outside world than the young islanders of twenty years ago.

The radio too, has made the islanders very much alive, not only to national, but to international affairs. They take an active and intelligent interest in such topics as the hydrogen bomb, the possibilities of war, and in world politics. They stay up at night to see the new comet, the Arend-Roland, and during the uprising in Hungary they organised a movement to contribute money to a fund for Hungarian refugees.

In general, however, in everyday life, the islanders' contact with the outside world is limited to that derived from their relationships with people on the adjacent mainland, and neighbouring islands, relationships which are not only political and economic, but also religious and social.

The sphere within which these relationships between islanders and non-islanders operate is limited chiefly to the adjacent mainland, especially to the towns of Louisburgh, Westport and Castlebar, to Achill Sound, ~~to~~ Curraun and to the neighbouring island of Inishturk. The only relationships of any significance that the island has with Ireland as a whole, relationships on a national rather than a local level, are of a political nature, at the times of the General Election, or of a General Census. At all other times the islanders are concerned very little with affairs on a national level.

Political relationships on a local level (i.e. with the adjacent mainland) are also of very little importance to the islanders, who have always had the most rudimentary form of political organisation themselves and take little interest in matters of a political nature.

When the islanders purchased their holdings in 1901 from the Congested Districts Board, they became landowners for the first time and, having suffered under the burden of exorbitant rates and the threat of eviction from their holdings for many generations, once freed of the control of a landlord, they refused from then onwards to pay rent or taxes.

The Mayo County Council have made repeated attempts to make the islanders pay rates, but the islanders maintain that, living on an island, they cannot benefit from such advantages as street lighting, garbage disposal, police protection, and so on. There have been no police on the island for more than twenty years now.

In 1926 a meeting was held by the islanders in conjunction with members of the Mayo County Council, at which it was decided that, since the only benefits that the islanders could obtain by paying rates were the upkeep of the island roads, and the provision of a resident doctor, they should pay half the mainland rates. By 1928 the islanders had stopped paying half rates because a resident doctor had not been provided.

Another meeting was held in 1946 at which a rate collector was appointed to collect the rates, one of the big farmers being deputed to do so, and the County Council promised to provide a resident doctor. Once again, with the provision of the doctor, the islanders gradually stopped paying rates, and the Mayo County Council has now ceased to demand or expect them. The islanders feel that the County Council should provide them with a safer landing place at Accony, where the present harbour is extremely dangerous on a stormy day, owing to the difficulty of entrance and exit. They say that when the pier at Accony is extended to make landing at the harbour safe in all weathers, they will be willing to pay rents.

The relationships that the islanders have with the mainlanders tend to be of a non-reciprocal nature, partly because the islanders are dependent on the mainland economically, for the sale of wool and livestock, and for shopping, so that while the mainlanders can exist independently of the islanders, the island is not self-sufficient economically and depends on mainland custom. Consequently, though the islanders visit the mainland frequently on business the mainlanders have, with the exception of buyers, no reason to visit the island, and rarely do so.

The attitude of the mainlanders towards the islanders tends also to result in the relationship between them being of a one-sided nature.

The Mayo people in general are almost completely ignorant of life on the island. They recognise Clare as, "The island shaped like a battleship," when the weather is fine enough for it to be visible from the mainland, but even in Accony itself, and in the nearest mainland village of Louisburgh, very few of the inhabitants have ever visited the island. The general ignorance about island life was manifested by an article in the "Mayo News", (April 1956) disputing the question of whether or not the council should provide funds to improve the harbour at Accony. This contained the erroneous information that the island population was 340, whereas it was in fact only 223.

The attitude of the mainlanders to the islanders is one of friendliness tinged with suspicion and a certain degree of contempt, chiefly because of the unfavourable impression that many of the islandmen create on fair days when, after making successful sales and drinking all day with friends and relatives, they walk around the streets of Louisburgh in varying states of inebriation. The mainlanders

maintain that the Clare Islanders are unfriendly and "very unobliging", and very reserved. You can never really get to know them, they say, and stress how different they are from other Mayo people in this respect.

When a Louisburgh teacher spent a year working on Clare and her family heard that she was "keeping company", with an islandman they were "horrified" at the idea of her marrying a man so much her social inferior. Girls from the mainland consider that they are marrying beneath them if they marry a Clare Islander, and this may account to some extent for the comparative rarity of island marriages to mainland women over the past seventy or so years (cf. Marriage).

The attitude of the islanders to the mainlanders is in general one of suspicion. Though they are dependent for their living on mainland custom they resent the way in which they are exploited at mainland fairs, where the mainlanders know they are reluctant to go to the trouble and expense of taking their stock back to the island again, and try to secure them at lower prices than they would offer to a fellow mainlander. Islanders feel that the Louisburgh people especially, are ready to exploit them in every possible way.

One islandwoman says of the mainland people, "They're very unfriendly, they're not like the Clare Island people that way", and another woman expressed the same view, saying that she hates to spend the night with people on the mainland if she is weatherbound because of this unfriendliness. An islandman remarked of the Louisburgh people, "There's no give and take with them. They've a very narrow way of thinking." The way in which the mainland people stand in the doorways of their houses, staring at the islanders when they come into town, is also regarded very unfavourably - as one island girl put it, "They don't know themselves." (i.e. they do not know how to behave).

A CURRAGH AT THE WESTERN HARBOUR.



The island curraghs are more substantial than those of other western islands and parts of the mainland, considerably more wood being used in their construction.

The majority of the curragh owners possess an outboard motor which they use for journeys to the mainland and for lobster fishing.

It is significant that when islanders go to the mainland, even if it is only to a fair, they will take care to wear their best clothes so that they will not discredit themselves in the eyes of the mainlanders. They are very sensitive to mainland opinion and determined to give the mainlanders no cause for ridiculing them.

The fact that most of the islanders have kin in, or near, Louisburgh with whom they stay when weatherbound after a fair, and whom they meet and drink with on fair days, provides the personal link between the island and mainland. When islanders go to fairs they know almost all the people they meet there and are expected, however distant the acquaintance may be, to shake hands and exchange news with him - "You don't know them but they knew your father." One man was very surprised to be hailed as a great friend by a man whom he took to be a complete stranger, but who it later emerged, was a distant cousin of his wife.

Relationships between the islanders and the people of Louisburgh, because of the ties of kinship created by the marriages of island women to mainland men in the Louisburgh area, are close, most of the islanders being known to the Louisburgh people, who are hailed by their Christian names by the islanders. Relationships with the people of Westport are less close and personal since the islanders rarely go beyond Louisburgh except on occasional shopping trips, and always stay in Louisburgh with kin, rather than in Westport with strangers.

In summer, when the men are lobster fishing, they will take their lobsters to Achill or Curraun and sell them there, combining this with shopping trips. They speak more favourably of the Achill and Curraun people than of the Louisburgh people, though the ties between them are less personal, since there has been very little intermarriage in recent years between this area and the island.

There has been a considerable increase in social as well as economic relationships with the mainland over the past twenty years because of the increase in the amount of ready money the islanders have at their disposal due to the higher prices they are being offered for cattle, sheep and wool. Trips to the mainland, costing ten shillings for the return journey, are made occasionally, chiefly in connection with sporting events. The islanders have recently formed a football team under the tuition of the priest and doctor, and with continued weekly practice, have reached a sufficiently high standard to compete with teams on the adjacent mainland in Gaelic Athletic Association competitions. Last summer the team, and its supporters, some of the younger girls, and men who welcomed a chance to visit the mainland, paid several visits to the mainland to play against Accony, Louisburgh, and other nearby villages. The island has gained the reputation of being in possession of promising players and when the Louisburgh team is short of players, as it frequently is, since the majority of its players are in college at Dublin or Maynooth, it will often send out for the pick of the island team to play with them against neighbouring villages in Mayo and Galway. The spirit of friendship which has developed recently between island and mainland, because of the islanders' interest in Gaelic football, has led to an increase in mutual understanding. The Accony team, having played Clare at Accony, came to the island a week later to play a return match, and were joined on the trip by football enthusiasts from Louisburgh. Many of the visitors had never been on the island before and were very impressed by the welcome they received. The islanders all gathered at the Quay to welcome the visitors and to entertain friends, or even slight acquaintances, to tea before and after the match.

Curragh racing also provides opportunities for social interaction between island and mainland. For the last seven years there has been a national championship, held at Galway, where the champion crews of several southern and western counties competed for a cup and prize money. The Clare Island crew have won the county championships, which are held on the coast near Louisburgh, every year, and compete in the national championships at Galway, and both events are attended by a great number of spectators from the island, the majority of these being younger people of both sexes and the older men. Married women do not attend these sporting events as a rule because they cannot spare time from household duties.

Islanders will also go out to attend such functions as curragh races in Leenane, Galway, hiring a car in Louisburgh and driving all the way there and back, spending a considerable amount of money on drink and food, and returning, after meeting friends and kin, to catch the boat to the island at nightfall. Sport plays an important part in increasing friendly relations between islanders and mainlanders, especially with the growing interest which the island men are displaying in it in recent years.

The relationships between island and mainland have, until recently, had a predominantly economic basis, and there is no doubt that there has been a certain amount of exploitation of the islanders by the mainlanders in these economic dealings. This has led to the islanders' attitude to the mainlanders being tinged with a feeling of suspicion which still continues to exist, though, since mainland buyers have been visiting the island to conduct their transactions, and have been offering good prices for the islanders' livestock, this suspicion is becoming increasingly less marked, as the resentment over economic exploitation diminishes.

The increase in social interaction between island and mainland too has led to a change in the island attitude. Though the average islander still has a certain mistrust of the mainlander because of past grudges, or imagined grudges, in economic dealings, the fact that opportunities for mainlanders to exploit the islanders at mainland fairs are growing less frequent because buyers visit the island instead, while amicable relationships, established through participation in sport, are increasing, has led to a greater degree of cordiality being established between island and mainland.

Apart from the economic and social contacts with the adjacent mainland and the less frequent contact with the inhabitants of such localities as Galway, Curraun, and Achill, the islanders are in close contact with the people of Inishturk, an island nine miles distant, both from Clare, and from the mainland.

It is interesting that, whereas the people of Louisburgh and the other nearby villages regard the Clare Islanders as of slightly inferior status to themselves, especially with regard to marriage, the Clare Islanders have a corresponding attitude towards the people of Inishturk. They maintain that the islanders are much more "backward" than Clare people, wild and "savage". They ridicule them constantly, especially for their propensity to marry "as soon as they leave school", and to remarry on the death of their first spouse, and for their fondness for cheap jewellery and gaudy clothes.

Contact between the two islands used to be more frequent in the days before there were motor boats. Often the Inishturk men, rowing the nine miles to the mainland in a curragh, would be caught in a storm and would be obliged to take shelter from it for a few days on Clare. During this time they would stay with kin or friends and go round

visiting all the families they knew. Now, with the advent of motor boats and the acquisition by the Inishturk Islanders of a larger boat, there is no need for them to seek rest or refuge on Clare Island, and they visit it very rarely. The Clare Islanders relied chiefly on the Inishturk Islanders' visits to establish contact with them, and have never visited Inishturk with any degree of frequency, though most of the older people have been there at least once.

Another factor that improves the relationship between the two islands is the marriages which occasionally take place between Clare men and Inishturk women. The Clare Islanders regard the Inishturk people as inferior. The attitude towards marriage to an Inishturk woman was summed up by a Clare Islandman talking of his friend, who had married a very good-looking Inishturk woman, "Of course no one on the island would marry him so he was lucky to get her; he'd never have been married otherwise," the impression he gave being that, though the Inishturk woman was undoubtedly better than no wife, at all, a Clare Island woman would have been infinitely more preferable. Any marriages that have taken place between the two islands have been when Clare men have married Inishturk women whom they met in England, or in two recent cases, when Inishturk women came to work on Clare Island at the inn and married islanders. The contact maintained with Inishturk nowadays is due chiefly to the kin of Inishturk women married on Clare Island, making periodic visits to Clare to stay with their kin, or to the children of such a marriage, going to stay with their mother's kin on Inishturk.

The chief reason for the continuance of contact between the islands now is the religious link between them. The people of Inishturk have no resident priest, so the Clare priest visits Inishturk each

month to say Mass, and to officiate at funerals or weddings. The people of both islands are expected to share the cost of paying for the boat used by the priest for the journey, and all houses have to pay an annual tax of a few shillings to cover this.

Every four years a confirmation ceremony is held on Clare Island, at which the Inishturk children are also confirmed. All the Inishturk candidates for confirmation, accompanied by their kin and friends, come to Clare and stay there for a few days with any family with whom they have any kinship connections, or with friends. This joint participation in a religious ceremony of great significance, is important in creating a sense of unity and friendship between the two islands which is probably stronger, simply because of its religious nature, than the economic relationship between the Clare Islanders and the mainlanders.

For the average Clare Islander contact with the outside world is of two sorts, the everyday contacts with the mainland and the neighbouring island of Inishturk, which is of a first hand, direct nature, and the contact maintained with the British Isles and United States through the information, gifts and money sent by kin living overseas and by their visits to the island, which is of an indirect nature.

In general it is true to say that the economic development of the island is reflected in the increase in the dependence of the islanders on the mainland, and the subsequent development of a cash economy, which in turn, has increased the degree and frequency of contact between the two societies. Increase in the possession of ready cash has made it possible for many islanders, who, twenty

years ago,would not have been able to leave the island except in cases of emergency such as illness,to make occasional trips to the mainland,and in doing so,to gain a greater knowledge of standards of living higher than their own.

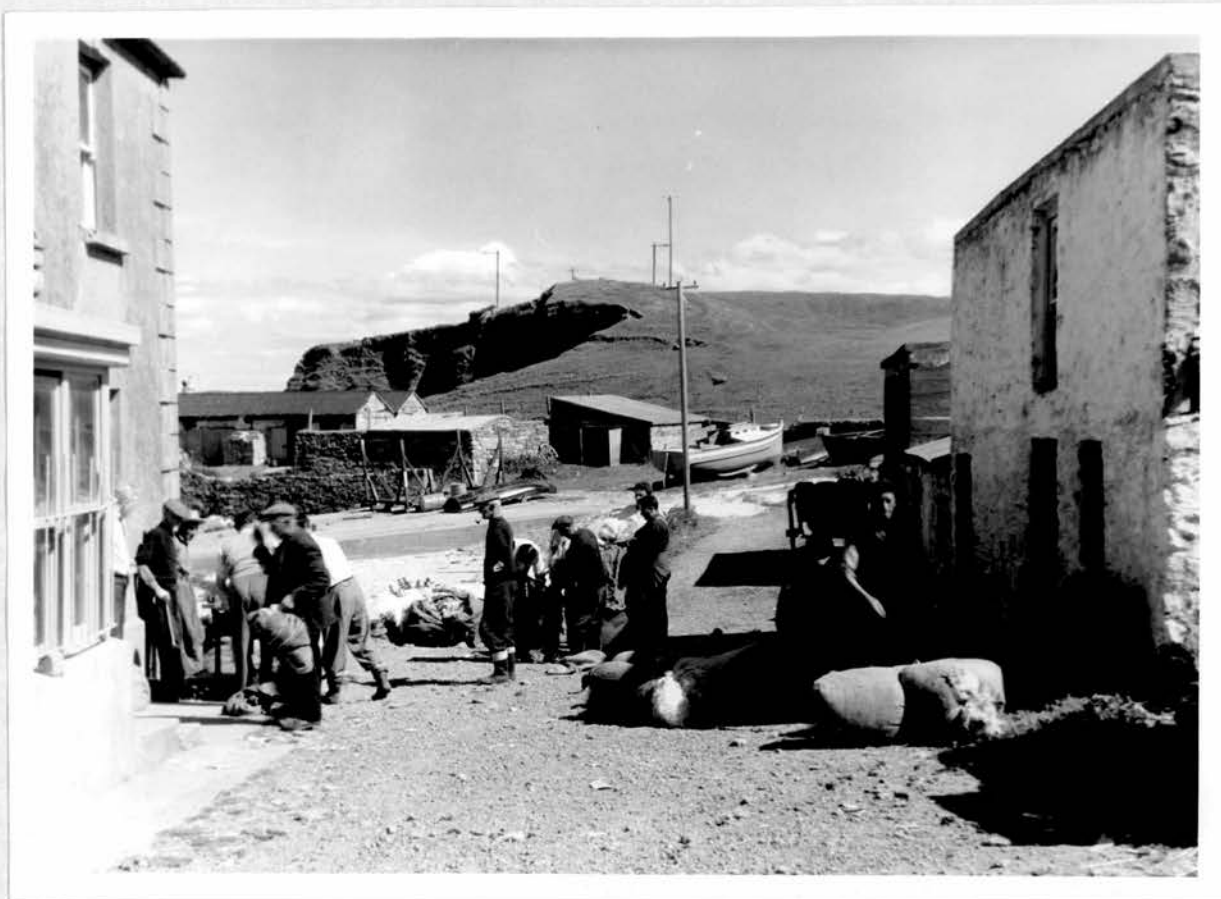
The economic development of the island has also made possible the increase of social contacts between the island and the mainland and has led to a greater degree of understanding between the two societies.

The islanders have two means whereby they can establish relationships with representatives of the outside world,firstly through the contacts that take place between the islanders and the adjacent mainland and neighbouring islands,and secondly,through those that take place between islanders who have settled overseas and those who remain on the island.

I have shown,in this chapter,the nature of the relationships that obtain between the islanders and the immediate representatives of the outside world,relationships which,in the main,developed through the economic dependence of the island on mainland custom.

In the following chapter I shall discuss the relationships between the islanders and the more distant representatives of the outside world,emigrants who have settled overseas. Whereas the relationships described in this chapter have primarily an economic basis I shall show that relationships established between the islanders and island emigrants have developed through the ties of kinship,and are consequently of a much more personal nature, though the contribution to the island economy made by emigrants cannot be overlooked.

THE WOOL BUYERS VISIT THE QUAY.



Men from the east selling wool at the Quay. Normally almost deserted in the early afternoon, the Quay presents an unusually lively scene when the wool is being sold. Note the characteristic dark sweaters and jackets and flat caps worn by the islandmen. The straw hat on the left is atypical and is a tribute to the fine weather.

CHAPTER 6.

THE ISLAND AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD.PART 2.

EMIGRATION,AND THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ISLANDERS AND EMIGRANTS.

Emigration first became a necessity to the Clare Islanders during the pre-Famine years of the 1800s when exorbitant rents extorted by landlords forced the islanders to look for work overseas in the summer months, in order to pay their rent. This was seasonal or "migratory" labour, the islandmen spending the summer months in Great Britain, usually in the Scottish potato fields, returning to spend the winter months with their families.

Emigration of a more permanent nature did not take place until after the Famine, when people were faced with widespread starvation because of the temporary lack of food, and when the great rush to settle in America began. Most of the emigrants were men. It was not considered suitable for women to emigrate since only work of the roughest kind was available at that time, and they were expected to stay on the island and wait for marriage.

It is only since the beginning of the present century that emigration has become so commonplace on the island that it is now accepted that every child will want to emigrate soon after he or she leaves school.

Until a few years ago people emigrated mainly to America and rarely to the British Isles, but now there is a growing tendency to emigrate to England or Scotland instead. This is probably due to the fact that work was scarce in the British Isles during the Depression of the 1920s, and those who tried to find work there were forced to return to the island. The war also discouraged

islanders from seeking work there until 1945. Another probable reason for the increase in permanent settlement of the islanders in Great Britain rather than America is that islanders who settle there can visit the island frequently with comparatively little expense, whereas those who emigrate to America cannot afford to return on a visit more than once or twice in a lifetime.

Nevertheless, though there is a growing tendency to emigrate to Great Britain rather than to America, there is still a feeling that America is much nearer to Ireland than the British Isles or the Continent, the attitude of the islanders being, "He's only in Chicago" whereas one of the islandwomen in a convent in France is regarded as being much farther away. This is probably because "Almost everyone on the island has relations in America."

The emigration rate is very high. I investigated the number of emigrants in eighty one sibling groups (including several sibling groups in which the youngest member was over seventy) in which there was a total of 458 individuals, 245 men and 213 women and obtained the following figures:-

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Never left island (apart from short visits to mainland)	71	56
Living on mainland	13	23
Living in British Isles	46	45
Living in U.S.A.	75	73
Returned emigrants	<u>40</u>	<u>16</u>
	245	213

These figures show that only 28.9% of the total number of men and 26.2% of the total number of women in these 81 sibling groups never left the island.

It is significant that considerably more men than women remain on the island, and still more so that a considerably greater number of men return after emigrating, whereas the women tend to remain overseas. Island women who have settled on the mainland are in a higher proportion than island men, because they marry on the mainland, whereas for men work is hard to find there and consequently they prefer to emigrate to Great Britain or the States. The majority of island women living on the mainland are married on to farms in the vicinity of Louisburgh.

These figures show that emigration to the U.S.A. has been higher than to Great Britain, though in recent years the situation has started to reverse. They also show that the proportion of men and women emigrating to both countries is virtually the same.

An example of the way in which emigration is depleting the population can be seen by the examination of six sibling groups in the village of Kille. Out of a total of 39 people in these sibling groups only twelve have never left the island, six have emigrated and returned after several years away, four have emigrated to the British Isles and 17 to America (Kille is a village in which the tradition of emigrating to America is strong, as many kinsmen of the villagers have emigrated there.)

If such a high percentage of people emigrate, unless the birth rate increases (a previous table has shown this to be very far from the case) the population will inevitably suffer a continual decline. The following table of population figures shows that this is what is in fact happening.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
1831	1616
1871	745
1891	692
1911	592
1926	479
1957	223

The Famine years of the 1840s had a drastic effect on the population. The combined effects of death through starvation and fever, and emigration, more than halved the population which has decreased steadily ever since then. In the last 31 years a decline of over 50% has occurred, and the island can justifiably be described as "an area of denudation."¹

The present day population of the island, showing the composition of the different age groups

<u>Age group</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Under 10 years	23	12	11
10-19	45	18	27
20-29	21	12	9
30-39	11	7	4
40-49	38	22	16
50-59	35	20	15
60-69	19	11	8
70-79	22	12	10
80 and over	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>
	223	120	103

At all times after the age of nineteen there are slightly fewer women than men. The difference is most marked between the 10-19 group and the 20-29 group and probably indicates that girls have more of an inclination to emigrate than boys. The 20-29 and the 30-39 groups, the most active and significant age groups in an agricultural community, have the lowest numbers of people, and

1. G.A. Duncan. Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy, op. cit.

there is a preponderance of people under 20 and over 40.

There are indications everywhere of the great effect upon island life of this decline in population. The roads have become overgrown with grass and weeds, the piers are idle, the beaches covered with the rotting hulks of old fishing boats and white ribs of broken curraghs. Many of the houses are in ruins, some only recently deserted, with the curtains still hanging in the windows. Most of all the decline in the life of the island can be seen in the composition of the island families, many houses being occupied by one or two old people instead of a young and vigorous family, and in the predominance of old people - 38% of the total population are over fifty years old.

At one time the custom provided by the islanders could support four shops, and one shopkeeper made so much money from buying eggs from the neighbours and selling them to the mainland that he was able, with the profits from this trade, to send his eldest son to train for the priesthood. Now custom is so poor that even the one remaining shop is not doing good trade.

The weekly dances in the hall are only attended by a handful of people, whereas twenty years ago the islanders say that the hall was so packed with people there ~~was~~ hardly room to stand, let alone to dance. There is great difficulty in finding "three good men," to compete as a crew in the county Curragh Championships, as there are few skilled rowers among the younger man, since none of them have time to spare from farm work to practise, and fishing is no longer carried on. "They've no one to pick from now," says an islander, "Twenty years ago you'd have forty or fifty men to pick from who were out fishing every day for six or seven months

in the year."

There are few young children on the island now because of the lack of marriages, and in Lecarrow (the largest village) there is only one girl of school age.

The islanders all hope that a sudden change will take place on the island, such as that which took place in Inishturk, which was regarded as a dying island in the 1920s, but which now, with a steadily increasing population of about 120, has 34 children of school age, approximately the same number as on Clare Island, though the population of Inishturk is only half that of Clare.

The effect the decline in population has had on the island is reflected most of all in the attitude of the islanders themselves. "The island used to be a grand place in summer," they say, with its inn and all the "strangers" from England and the mainland who came to stay there, bringing new outlooks and new interests to the island (now in a summer the inn will perhaps have one or two visitors, never more). They regret the way in which houses, once filled with popular and lively families, who often gave dances and always had a great welcome for anyone who called there, have become empty. Everyone stresses the loneliness. As one emigrant, visiting the island after thirty years in Chicago, said before returning to the States last year, "This place is too lonely to die in."

People visit each other much less frequently now, because of the distance between the few remaining houses, and because the shortage of labour gives them less time for social activities. The general feeling is one of regret at the decline of the island and it is often said that, "The island is not what it was."

One woman said that a few years ago you could walk along the road and meet "Crowds of people" whereas now you meet no one. An emigrant returning on a visit after thirty-two years absence in America did not enjoy his stay at all. He was amazed to find that Tormore, a village occupied by nine thriving families when he left, now consisted of only two occupied houses, and eight people, including his brother's family. He said it made him feel "very lonesome". One bachelor of sixty-five told me that thirty years ago, when every house had nine or ten people in it, the island was as lively as anywhere on the mainland, full of tourists, the men busy herring-fishing, and sometimes as many as four "house" dances in a week. Whereas there used to be three personable girls in every house, he says, there are now not more than a dozen on the whole island. A girl of fourteen had this to say about the island, "Long ago on this island people used to have great fun - they'd be in and out of each other's houses every night, and they'd make a dance almost every night, but now, the Lord save us, this island is going to the dogs - you get no fun on it at all. Long ago the people were innocent and they made great fun for themselves, but now they are kind of shrewd and there's no fun at all."

"The young people are gone, and the old ones in their graves," a widow of sixty sums up the situation, while the island "chief" admits of the island, "The young people won't stay in it, and the old people are dying and this place is wound out."

One woman told me that what brought home to her most forcibly the state of the island today was when she went to St. Brigid's Well at the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in

August, to say prayers, "do the stations", with her neighbours, and found that, whereas when she was a child, "there used to be a pilgrimage" of hundreds of people, one at least from every house, at the holy well on this special day, there was just herself and her neighbour, "And I thought to myself, the Lord have mercy on all that's gone."

The fact that so many of the young people do emigrate means that life is made correspondingly more monotonous for those who remain, because of the lack of company, and of social activities such as dances, and because of the necessity to work harder since there are fewer people in each family to share the work. Consequently they also feel the desire to emigrate to escape from the monotony of island life, especially when they receive letters from emigrant kin describing the advantages of life outside the island, and urging them to leave.

The economic war with England in 1940, and the effects it had on lowering the price of livestock and farm produce in the years following, increased the tendency to emigrate, since the men became discouraged with farming, feeling that they could not earn a living from it, and many people emigrated during this period who might otherwise have stayed on the island.

When boys leave school they will help their father on the island, and occasionally hire themselves out to the big farmers who need help, or they can take up lobster fishing to earn a supplementary income in the summer. There is no alternative for girls, before they are old enough to emigrate, except to help their mother in the house, and since families are small now, most women do not need much help and there is no outlet for their daughters' energies,

so they have a greater incentive to emigrate than the boys.

The lack of marriage on the island, and the late age at which it is likely to occur, if it occurs at all, is also a great contributory factor towards emigration, especially for women. The average woman either does not want to marry and settle on the island at all, or realises that she must stay at home and wait for the very remote possibility that some one may marry her. Rather than wait for a hypothetical proposal of marriage the island girl usually chooses to emigrate, unless she is needed at home to look after old parents or a bachelor brother.

Another factor which probably increases the tendency to emigrate is the way in which parents tend to give their children very little independence, either financial or psychological, even when they have reached maturity, so long as they still occupy the parental house. Many children tend to resent this and yet, because of the system of land inheritance, can do little to change it while they remain under the parental roof. It is possible that many people treat emigration as a "rite de passage," leaving the island to gain the independence from parental authority they would never achieve by remaining on the island. They leave to establish their adulthood, and if they do return it is on a different basis, for they have established their independence.

Most people emigrate before they reach the age of twenty, partly because they fear that, if they remain on the farm too long, one or both of their parents may die, and they may be forced to remain at home to help aged parents, or in the case of a girl, to keep house for a bachelor brother. Some girls emigrate

at fifteen, but this is regarded as too early. Of one girl of fifteen who left to work in Coventry last year her grandfather said, "Her parents couldn't do anything to stop her going, but she's far too young."

One woman says of her sister who emigrated to America at sixteen, her aunt paying her passage, "She went to her aunt's - that's why she went so young. It was too young to go - if people go young they aren't interested in coming home again." Another woman, describing how she felt when she emigrated to America in her teens, said "I didn't think anything about it at the time. I was young - I just lived one day at a time then."

People say the ideal age to emigrate is in the late teens because if a person goes later he will not like it, or be able to settle down in the new country. Judging by two atypical examples of middle-aged people who emigrated last year, this seems to be the case. A spinster of forty-five who had acted as housekeeper for the island priest for several years, went with him to act in the same capacity on the mainland, but after two weeks was so lonely, because she had never left the island before, that she gave up her job and returned to the island to live with her married brother and his family.

T., a married man of fifty-five, went to England with his cousin, an islander settled in England who had been to the island on holiday and had found T. a job on the farm on which he worked, for three months. T's wife said to me a few days after he had gone, "My man has gone from me. The children are all so lonely after him - they miss him so much. If ever there was any trouble he was always there to joke about it and make it all right - its not the same without him. He's been talking of going to England

for the past three years but he's never done anything about it and when he told me on Sunday, I never thought he meant it till he started getting his things together to leave on Monday. I didn't like to tell him not to go - though I didn't want him to go. He said he'd have nothing more to do until harvest - he'd done all the work, and J (son) is well able to see to everything, and if you aren't fishing lobsters at this time of the year there's not much else to do. But I'm worried about him - he's never been away before and I'm worried something will happen him."

Three weeks later T. returned from England, saying that he could not stand life there, he could not eat the bread and hated the tea, and was delighted to be home again, though the general opinion was that he should have stuck it out till harvest, "If there'd been anything in him he'd have stayed a bit longer and not come running home like a gossoon (child)," said his cousin's mother, and a neighbour added, "A lot of people would be ashamed to do that - he should have stayed three months."

It tends to be the elder children who emigrate, when they can pass on the responsibility of looking after their parents to younger siblings who are not old enough to emigrate, and who often find that when they are ready to emigrate the parents are too old to be left alone, so are forced to stay on the island.

Island parents expect that at least one of their children should remain at home to look after them, and if their children have all emigrated, as soon as the parents need their help on the farm they will recall one of their sons to look after them. Two old people at Bunnamohaun found the management of the farm too much

for them so recalled their son who was earning a good living in America. He came at once, bringing with him his Mayo-born wife, whom he married in America and who very much resented settling in Clare Island, though she has become resigned to it after twenty years of island life. I suggested that it would be more practical to ask the old parents to leave the island and to come and live with their children in England or America, but this suggestion was greeted with horror, "You couldn't ask your old parents to make such a great sacrifice," "The land is very important to the old people," "You couldn't ask the old people to leave the land."

A girl of fifteen told me, "Mammy has never been beyond Dublin because she was the only one in the family. If she'd had brothers or sisters I suppose she'd have been off to England or America but she had to stay with the old people. It must be awfully hard to be the only one in the family."

One woman of sixty was recalled from America, when her sister, who was looking after her parents, died. "I came back because of my parents. They were old so I stayed to help them and comfort them and to lay them in their graves, and then I was too old to leave."

A bachelor of forty told me he was working in England and intended to go to America the following year when he heard that his younger brother, who was looking after his widowed mother on the island, was leaving for America, "And when I heard that I knew that had me finished - I had to come home."

In some cases where there are several siblings, responsibility for looking after the parents is shared. Two sons of twenty and twenty four share the responsibility of helping their old father on the farm, each spending approximately two years in England, turn

AN ISLANDWOMAN WITH HER DOGS.



This woman had to return to the island from England, where she had a job in a factory, to look after her two bachelor brothers and old mother. Now she is kept at home by kinship obligations and can neither leave the island nor marry an islandman.

and turn about, so that the old man is never left without help. Similarly two sisters take turns in looking after their old father and bachelor brother, alternating two years on the island with two years in England.

Kin exercise a sort of moral blackmail over emigrants. The sense of obligation to look after one's kin is so strong that even when a man is earning good wages in England and is married with a family and home of his own, he will allow himself to be persuaded to return to the island if his own family need him. One man in this position received a letter from his widowed mother saying that his elder brother was too ill to manage the farm and he must return home to take over the inheritance, which he did, "It wasn't Mick's choice. He would rather have stayed in England on his own, but I suppose he felt a filial duty to come back," said his neighbour.

The islanders do not choose the country to which they emigrate at random. There is a tradition in particular families of emigration either to England, America or Scotland, one person from that family having migrated there years ago, and all subsequent emigrants preferring to go somewhere where they have kin or fellow islanders who will meet them on their arrival, perhaps lend them money, or find them a job, and in general help them over the initial difficulties of adapting themselves to a new way of life. If a kinsman is well established in a good job he will be able to accommodate them and finance them when they arrive and may even pay their passage out.

In 1957 one twenty year old islander was planning to leave after the harvest, for Chicago, where his two brothers are living and will pay his passage out; a girl of sixteen whose sister

emigrated to England a year ago went over to join her. The sister found her a job in the hospital where she works. A fifteen year old girl went to Coventry where her father has two brothers and four sisters. One of the sisters is accommodating her, she has been found a job as a clerical assistant, and on her arrival received a complete wardrobe of clothes from her kin.

One girl has taken a temporary job in Castlebar until she is old enough to join her father's sisters in America. There is no tradition of settling on the adjacent mainland because work has always been hard to obtain there and an islandwoman says of this girl, "She'll be much more lonely in Castlebar than she will be in America because in America she has her "friends" (kin) who will make a fuss of her. She has no one in Castlebar."

It is characteristic of the west of Ireland for emigrants from a certain district to settle in, or "colonise" one particular town, or quarter of a town, in the country to which they emigrate. When, for instance, a Kerryman goes to England he will join the colony of Kerry people in Birmingham, or, if he goes to America, in Boston, New York, or Springfield, Mass.

The Clare Island people have set up a similar colony of emigrants in Coventry, and Birmingham, in England, and in Chicago and Los Angeles in the United States. On last St. Patrick's day the Irish in Chicago had a parade at which two men from the island spoke in public in the city.

It is for the first few months that a new emigrant feels the need for the presence of kin or fellow islanders. He will stay with them at first, and then after a few months he will have become familiar with the new way of life and will not necessarily stay in

the colony but may take a job in some other part of the country. Emigrants living in the same city keep in close touch with each other, visit each other frequently and help each other in trouble. One man of forty recalls how when he was twenty he was working with other Clare Island boys on the building sites, living in cheap hostels, and how an islandwoman, with a home of her own used to be very good to them, inviting them frequently to her house for meals just because they were fellow islanders.

Even in Dublin, where there are very few islanders, chiefly in the boarding house business, or working in hotels, they visit each other constantly and exchange news of the island, and all islanders visiting Dublin will stay with fellow islanders who have settled there.

Most of the intending emigrants are vague about what sort of a job they will take when they arrive in the new country, usually relying on kin to find them jobs. The choice of jobs which are open to islanders is necessarily limited by their lack of education. They either take unskilled jobs, or jobs in which they receive payment while training. Many of the women who go to England work as maids in hospitals or hotels, train as nurses or work in factories. In America the most usual work is domestic service or factory work. In the last fifty years three of the island women have become nuns and two of the islandmen priests.

The majority of the men take unskilled jobs as labourers on the construction of building sites or roads, or as farm workers. Some work as factory hands and a few achieve considerable success in business especially in America. One islander said of Clare, "It's only a small little dot on the map, but the people from here are well able to give an account of themselves when they

emigrate." He says that three of the alderman in Chicago have been islanders - one of whom emigrated from Clare as a "wild young youth" when his family were evicted from their home, and went to Chicago where he worked his way up into big business. Now he will find jobs for any islander who goes to Chicago and needs work, and has revisited the island three or four times since he left, giving money to every family, and spending a lot of time by the ruins of his old home.

Parents tend to encourage emigration, provided that they do not need their children at home to look after them. As one woman said of her large family of children, all under sixteen, "There's no life for any of them here - they'll go over to England as soon as they're old enough - I want them to - it's no life here."

Not all the young islanders want to emigrate however. An attractive girl of twenty eight refuses to emigrate to England with her island sweetheart and has chosen to let him go alone and remain unmarried on the island rather than leave and go with him. Another girl who has been working in London for several years has come home to live with her family and says she will probably not return to England, "I like Clare Island you know, " she explains.

In general those who remain on the island tend to be the weaker, more delicate people. In one family of eight children six of the siblings have emigrated, leaving a sickly brother, crippled with rheumatism and a hunchback sister, whereas in another family six brothers have emigrated to England leaving behind the youngest to look after the farm, and a delicate invalid brother who is almost blind.

The stronger, more active people seek outlets for their

energies in emigration since there are none on the island, whereas the weaker ones are content with life as it is and do not want to emigrate.

When a person emigrates he does not lose contact with his island kin, nor does he become exempt from obligations to his parents and siblings. Emigrants are expected to write to their kin at Easter, Christmas and on St. Patrick's Day, and to send them gifts of food, clothes and especially money. "If it wasn't for America the people here would go naked," says a woman who receives all her own and her children's clothes from her sister in America, as do many families. An example of the extent of the financial aid which emigrant kin give to those on the island is shown by B., a bachelor who lives in a semi-ruined house high up on the hillside. His sister sent him a cheque for £100 from Chicago for Christmas and a year later visited him and said she would either pay his passage out to America or else pay for a new house to be built for him nearer to the roadside. Pim¹ writes in 1848 about this, "These remittances, coming from working men and women depending upon their daily labour for support, prove at the same time their industry, their economy, and that love of kindred which absence and distance cannot efface."

Freeman, speaking of the economic role of emigration, maintains that "The peasant community in the west has maintained its identity largely through the seasonal and permanent migration of many of its members."²

Emigrants try to return home to visit their kin as often as

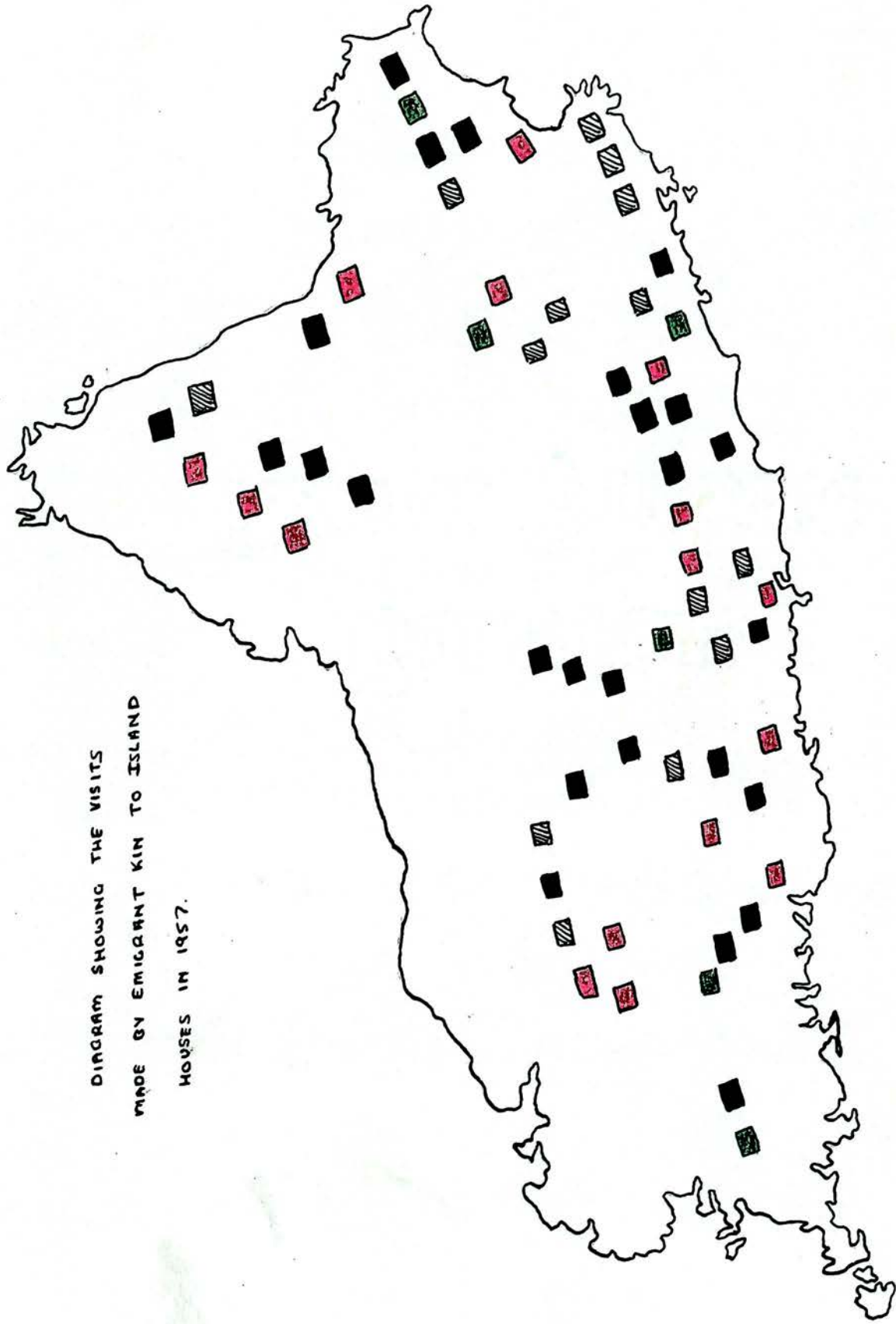
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1. J. Pim. The condition of Tenant Farmers. Dublin, 1848.
 2. T.W. Freeman. Emigration & Rural Ireland, 1943.

they can, and often they will return after an absence of as long as thirty years, to see their old parents before they die, or just to see their old home again.

In 1956 three men in their sixties, all from Chicago, returned home to the island on a visit. One, whose house has now fallen down, and who has no close kin on the island, came back for the third time in thirty years, just to see the island, the other two were paying their first visit after thirty years away. One of these men stayed for three months, spending two months at the "old place", the house in which he was born, with his brother and his wife, and another month with his sister in her husband's house. "He was very lively - he went to all the dances," said his sister, who gave a dance for him at her house. The Clare Island people in Chicago had asked him to bring them back Clare Island fish as a present so he spent many of his days fishing for gurnard, which he caught and dried in the sun to take back to the exiles in Chicago, a common practice among visitors from the States.

When people return after a long absence they are met at the Quay by all their friends and neighbours. They spend the first two or three days confined to the house in which they are staying, "resting" and receiving visitors. On the first night the house is full of kin to whom the emigrant distributes presents, usually clothes, and there is a great deal of talking and reminiscing. People try to pay their visit to the emigrant on his first night home since on that night the house will be full of people and the atmosphere is more that of a party. The emigrant will travel all round the island before he leaves, calling on all the people he knew,

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE VISITS
MADE BY EMIGRANT KIN TO ISLAND
HOUSES IN 1957.



-  KIN FROM U.S.A.
-  KIN FROM THE BRITISH ISLES
-  KIN FROM THE MAINLAND
-  HOUSES WHICH DID NOT RECEIVE VISITORS IN 1957.

who, because of sickness or age, were unable to call and see him. He will be accompanied by a brother, sister or parents, very rarely being seen alone.

People who have settled in the British Isles tend to come back to the island regularly, either every year or every two years, to stay with their kin, trying to time their visit so that they can help with the harvest, especially if the family needs their help. As can be seen from the table, out of the sixty one houses on the island only twenty six houses did not have visits from overseas kin in 1957.

This return of emigrants is a demonstration of the very close bond that exists between the islanders and their emigrant kin, even after so long a period of absence as thirty years, and in cases where the emigrant has very few close kin left on the island, yet still returns to visit it, it shows the affection people feel for the island and indicates that emigration is not so much a matter of choice as of necessity for many, due to the economic organisation of the island and the system of land inheritance.

Emigrants return in new clothes with plenty of ready cash and a smart appearance, and, those who return every year from England especially, influence those who remain at home to emigrate too. Not only does their successful appearance encourage fellow islanders to follow their example and emigrate, but they supply useful information about the outside world and its values. Being islanders themselves their first-hand experience of life in England or America is more valuable than the advice and information offered by strangers who used to visit the island on holiday and who formed

the islanders' chief contact with the outside world. Consequently if people emigrate now they are equipped with knowledge from close kin or friends, who have faced the disadvantages and difficulties of life overseas, and who can give help and advice to intending emigrants. The element of risk is consequently much less than if the islander emigrated without this foreknowledge. Those who stay on the island, and those who go, are more aware of what they are accepting or rejecting than they would have been a few years ago, before emigration to England became commonplace after the war, and before recent emigrants to England started to return regularly to the island on holiday.

It is an interesting fact that among the island population there is a considerable proportion of people who have emigrated but who have returned again to settle down permanently on Clare.

The total adult population (i.e. over 19 years of age) of the island is 165 people.

Table illustrating the number of people in the Clare Island community who have had experience of life overseas

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Returned after a year or more in U.S.A.	8	9
Returned after a year or more in Great Britain	32	12
Returned after less than a year in U.S.A.	0	1
Returned after less than a year in Great Britain	4	1
Returned after working in Ireland	0	13
Islanders who have made short visits of a few days to mainland - (fairs, staying with kin, pilgrimages, etc.)	31	23
Islanders who have never left the island at all, or never gone beyond Castlebar	19	12

Sixty one people (36.9% of the total adult population) have been working in Great Britain or America from periods ranging from

1-14 years and have spent an average of 3.6 years away from the island before returning, either from choice or because of kinship obligations. Of these returned emigrants there are twice as many men as women. The average age of men and women who have returned from the States is higher than those who have returned from Great Britain, 61 for men and 64 for women, as opposed to 51 for men and 40 for women returning from Great Britain. This seems to indicate that the returns from America took place less recently than the returns from Great Britain and that people are returning from the States less frequently than they once did, during the Depression, and that they are returning from Great Britain more frequently.

Only 54 people have left the island for short visits to the mainland, some to Dublin, some on pilgrimages to Knock and so on. The majority of these have never spent more than two weeks at a time away from the island, and have not gone outside Co. Mayo. Thirty one people have never left the island at all, or have at most only visited Castlebar or Westport once in their lives.

There are two types of returned emigrants, those who return from choice, and those who return because of kinship obligations. People in the latter category were often very reluctant to return and resent being kept on the island. One girl who has returned to look after her widowed mother and bachelor brother, because her brother will not marry, said bitterly, "He has my life ruined now." Another woman who spent four years in Coventry working in a brewery, and had to return when the war started, said "I'd live and die in England to tell you the truth, I loved it. I'd never have come back if it hadn't been for the war. I often regret it - it's

hard to come back when you've been used to life in England."

Many of the emigrants who return from choice do so because they are lonely or unsuccessful abroad and homesick for the island. "You long to get back to the island," said one man who had returned from England. Islanders say that there are many emigrants who would welcome a chance to return to the island if they could inherit the family farm. If they see a chance to get a bit of land on the island they will take it, said an islander, citing as an example three brothers who had good jobs in England, one as a shopkeeper, and two as policemen. The shopowner rushed back, when his father became ill, to inherit the "old place", one of the others came home and married a girl a few years older than himself and settled on her parents' farm, and a few years later the third also returned home and "married in," to a returned emigrant from the States, who had inherited her parents' farm.

Another man, living in Newcastle, persuaded his bachelor brother, who had inherited the farm, to sell it to him, and returned with his English wife and family to farm it.

It is significant that of the returned emigrants there are twice as many men as women. This is probably due to the system of land inheritance, and to the relative status overseas of men and women emigrants.

Many of the men who return do so because they have inherited the family holding, or will be likely to inherit it when their parents die, whereas a woman will only inherit the farm if she has no brothers. Consequently she had no place to return to, unless the farm is owned by a bachelor brother, to whom she can return and offer to keep house for him, or unless she can find a

husband on the island, a very unlikely eventuality now that marriage has virtually died out on Clare.

When men emigrate they are usually able only to obtain jobs with low status connotations, such as navvies, and are consequently regarded by the people in the country to which they have emigrated as being low on the social scale. There is no such indignity for them on the island where they have their own land and are independent of authority, and that is why, if they get a chance to return, they will take it. The women have a better chance of "upward mobility" than the men, because the nature of their jobs, as nurses, maids etc. brings them into contact with a less limited range of acquaintances than is open to the men in their jobs, and they can more easily become acclimatised to the new way of life. They can also marry and escape from uncongenial jobs in that way, whereas on the island, life is more monotonous and restricted for the women than for the men.

The high percentage of returned emigrants in the population is interesting since it raises the question of whether these returned emigrants, leaving aside those who have been forced to return through kinship obligations, have rejected the values of other cultures, after having put them to the test over a long period. A considerable number of the islanders have not only voluntarily sought out contact with other more technologically advanced cultures, but, after a period of time, have also voluntarily rejected this contact in favour of the old way of life. As Fawcett¹ observes, "A man....who has once sampled extreme simplicity of existence will seldom return to the artificial life of

1. P.H. Fawcett. Exploration Fawcett. London 1953.

civilization. The burden of it is not realised until it has been laid aside."

The reason why these emigrants, in spite of their experience of the material advantages other societies have to offer, have chosen to return to the island way of life, seems to be because the security and solidarity afforded by close ties with kin and neighbours, in the midst of whom a man has grown up and in the midst of whom he hopes to die, outweigh for him advantages of a material kind.

There is no doubt that these returned emigrants who have proved, simply by the fact of their returning, their attachment to the island way of life in preference to other ways of life, are a considerable influence on those who have not emigrated, in convincing them that the island life is superior to other ways of life, and it is for this reason that returned emigrants play an important role in increasing the desire of the community to maintain its way of life unchanged .

In these first few chapters my object has been to present a general picture of Clare Island as it is today, by describing its historical background, the nature of its economy, and the daily life of its inhabitants. I have shown that Clare cannot be regarded as an "integral" community, if we accept Firth's definition of such a community, as structurally self-contained, and independent to a great extent of the wider society to which it belongs geographically. Because of its relationships with the outside world Clare can be considered rather as a "sectional" community, in the sense that it is "structurally a part of a wider entity."

PART TWO.

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAND COMMUNITY.

CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE ISLAND COMMUNITY

Although the settlement pattern on Clare Island is one of sparsely scattered, isolated farms, often several minutes walk away from each other, and very rarely adjacent, and although there is no formal village organisation, with shops, or a village square, or even a cluster of adjacent houses, to indicate the presence of a village, yet the islanders recognise thirteen separate villages.

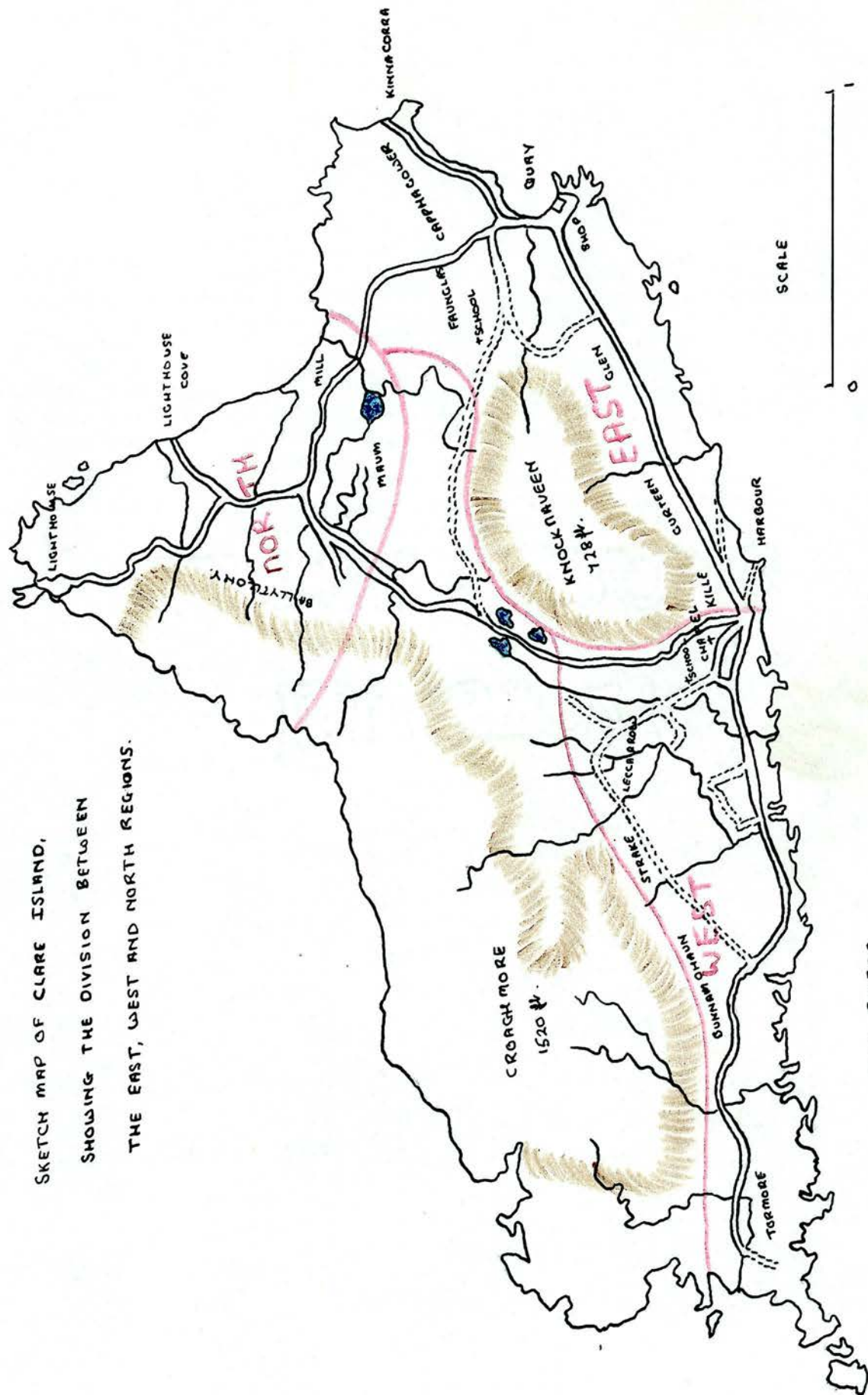
Even when the population of the island was considerably larger than it is now, with 242 houses, the villages were comparatively small, having an average of eighteen houses per village. Now with only sixty one houses, giving an average of 4.69 houses per village, some of the villages are so small that they have almost disappeared. Tormore, for instance, now consists of three houses, one recently abandoned, and has only eight inhabitants, and the largest, Lecarrow, has only seven houses.

<u>Name of village</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Number of inhabited houses.</u>
Tormore	The bleaching green	2
Bunnamohaun	The hollow of the huts	5
Strake	A strip of land	6
Lecarrow	An eighth	7
Kille	Church	6
Gurteen	A little field	5
Glen	Glen	5
Faungloss	Green slope	4
Cappnagower	Hillock of the goats	6
Mill	Mill	2
Maum	Mountain pass	2
Ballytuohy	North village	5
Quay	Quay	6

SKETCH MAP OF CLARE ISLAND.

SHOWING THE DIVISION BETWEEN

THE EAST, WEST AND NORTH REGIONS.



People recognise each village as an entity, clearly demarcated from other villages, even though it is impossible to detect any form of boundary or dividing line between the different villages. The suggestion that the villages should be amalgamated is strongly resented by the islanders who refuse to abandon their old form of village organisation, in spite of the fact that the rapid decline in population is making it progressively more meaningless, as more and more houses become deserted and the villages continue to dwindle in size. The only time when the villages lose their separate identity is during the "stations" (a cycle of religious celebrations), when the smaller villages each join with a larger one, to make eight larger groups. For the purpose of the "stations" only eight villages are recognised - Bunnamohaun (and Tormore), Gurteen (and Glen), Quay (and Faungloss), Ballytuohy (and Maum and Mill), Strake, Lecarrow, Kille and Cappnagower, and eight separate ceremonies are held instead of thirteen.

In addition to the village organisation the islanders recognise three different "regions", the north, west and east. As can be seen from the sketch map these divisions are not geographically accurate. Since there is no south region part of the east region is extended to include the southern coast on the one side, and part of the west region extended to include the rest of the southern coast on the other. The island is talked of constantly in terms of east, west and north, the east being the more level and fertile area by the Quay, stretching along the coast road to the chapel, the most densely populated region, containing the villages of Cappnagower, Faungloss, Quay,

Glen, Gurteen and part of Kille. The west includes the most remote part of the island, comprising the hillside farms of Strake, Lecarrow, Tormore, Bunnamohaun and the rest of Kille. The north is chiefly hill and bog land and is the most sparsely populated area, comprising the villages of Maum, Mill and Ballytuohy.

Although the islanders refer constantly to the different regions of the island, speaking of going, "back west", "out north", or "over to the Quay", these regions are, in the islanders' minds, much less clearly demarcated than are the villages, and most people are very uncertain, if questioned, about where to draw the exact dividing line between the regions. There is a general consensus of opinion as to the demarcating line between east and north, but the division between east and west is less clear. An islander will often be uncertain of this division, as there is considerable doubt as to which region those near the chapel belong to, though most people agree that the chapel itself provides the demarcating line between east and west.

The social structure of Clare Island is manifested in three ways, which can be described as island unity, "regional" unity, and village unity.

Island unity, the feeling of loyalty and ties of affection that the islanders have for each other, is so strong that it continues to exist even when the islanders emigrate. It is a characteristic of the west of Ireland that when people from one county or locality emigrate they tend to "colonise" a certain city in the British Isles or America, so that even when they are away from their homes they are surrounded by their own people.

Islanders who emigrate tend to settle in the same city as fellow islanders and make an attempt to continue the old way of life in new surroundings. They keep in close touch with fellow islanders in the same locality, visiting each other and helping each other in time of trouble. For instance one islander working in Coventry made a special point of visiting another islander, not a particular friend of his, regularly, while he was in a mental home, and other islanders did the same. Men and women emigrants from the island show a distinct preference for each other in marriage as opposed to Irish emigrants in general. This "colonisation" of emigrants from the island shows the desire the islanders feel to maintain the social organisation as far as possible even when they have left the island.

Island unity also manifests itself in the loyalty islanders show to each other and in the united front that they will present against strangers. Although they are ready and willing to discuss the defects and peculiarities of strangers and non-island residents such as the doctor and lightkeepers, and to a lesser extent the innkeeper, who, because he is not a farmer like the rest of the islanders, and leads a different way of life, seems to be discussed more readily, they are very unwilling to criticise or ridicule each other in front of strangers. When questioned they refuse to admit that there were, or are now, any unpleasant people on the island, and deny the possibility of any islander committing a crime, regarding murder as quite out of the question, and theft as a very unlikely eventuality. Doors are left unlocked both day and night even when the house is unoccupied, for instance, while all the family are at mass or at the bog cutting turf, and

if people leave the island for a few days they will fasten the door with string to keep stray cattle out, and make not the slightest attempt to lock them. One man asked why should anyone want to lock the door at night, "If anyone comes in it would only be some one you know." A woman, talking of the feeling one has for fellow islanders, whether or not one may have a personal liking for them, accounts for it, "You know how it is with some one you've known all your life - you remember all the good turns they've done you - it's different with a stranger." This attitude shows the cohesion which the islanders have achieved through familiarity with each other, and through the constant cooperation and interaction which takes place between neighbours.

The loyalty and feeling of unity that exists between the islanders is accompanied by a general feeling of mistrust of all "strangers", or non-islanders. This feeling of mistrust is expressed by the phrase "black stranger," which the islanders use when referring to someone whom they have never seen before, nor know by reputation, and with whom they cannot establish kinship connections. The adjective "black" refers not to the colouring of the stranger but to the depth of his strangeness. The attitude of distrust for the completely unknown, expressed by the phrase "black stranger" is coupled with a sense of superiority. The islanders have the reputation among people of the adjacent mainland and neighbouring islands of being very conceited or "up on themselves" regarding all non-islanders with a certain amount of scorn. They have a poor opinion of the islanders of Inishbofin, whom they regard as primitive and full of superstitions. They say that the Inishbofin people are

unfriendly, unlike the Clare people, and will not speak to you if you speak to them. The scenery of Inishbofin is dull and flat to the Clare Islanders, and they still hold it against the people there that until recently they used to refuse to rescue a drowning person, believing that the sea was claiming the person as a right, and that if he was rescued, the sea, deprived of its prey, would take the rescuer in revenge at a later date. As one island woman said of an Inishbofin woman, married to an island man, after a dispute with her, "She only came from Inishbofin - what can you expect?"

The people of Inishturk are regarded as wild, savage and uncontrolled by the islanders, who are themselves shy and retiring people, where the "Turks" are gay, uninhibited and emotional. The islanders stress how "primitive" and "backward" Inishturk is compared with Clare Island, and say what a horrible island it is because it is so small and rocky. One eighteen year old boy discussing the islands of the west coast says "Clare is the nicest island of the whole lot. Inishturk is an awful place - there's nothing in it but rocks,* and a woman added it was a "very forlorn sort of a place."

One man told me how much he liked the Clare Island people because they were so "level-headed", and cited as an example the behaviour of the islanders at the Curragh Championships when the island canoe was winning. All the other crews were being cheered by their supporters but the Clare Islanders showed no excitement and did not cheer at all, "You have to admire them for that," he said. Clare Islanders frequently say that the "Turks" are "like savages" because they are so emotional and have a great liking for jewellery, badges and all sorts of personal

decorations.

The feeling of island unity is intensified in the strong regional unity which takes the form of a deep feeling of local patriotism for the region in which one lives. There is surprise and disappointment if a stranger admits to preferring a region of the island from which his questioner does not come, to the questioner's own region. This local patriotism is expressed by the preference people have for their own region and the way in which they tend to make derogatory remarks about other regions.

Though people from the west are as attached to their region as the easterners and northerners are to their regions it is usually the western region which comes in for the most criticism. The people of the east and north dislike the bleak ruggedness of the west and its remoteness from both the Quay and the chapel, and say they would not live at the west, because "There is no life at all there, you never see people passing along the road to the chapel or the Quay." They regard the furthest western villages as the back of beyond. A man said of two men from Tormore, the most westerly village on the island, "They're a bit crazy - but no wonder - anyone'd be crazy living up where they do." They say of their own regions, "Cappnagower is a lovely place, you can see the boats coming in from Accony from our house without even leaving the fire - you miss nothing." "The north is the only place to live," "There's always a good dance at the north, no matter whose house it's in." "The Quay is the only place to live," etc.

The westerners find the north and eastern regions too confined by the hills. They say you cannot see the sea because

the hills shut you in so much that you do not feel as if you are on the island at all - "You'd be suffocated by all those hills." All the westerners praise the fine views they can get from their houses and say that if they had the opportunity they would not want to live anywhere else. One old man said he likes the west better than the other regions because "It is more exposed - But of course I was brought up here," he added in explanation. Of the north the westerners say, "The north is an awful place to live in - it's a backward sort of a place." "It has a very unlived in sort of appearance."

The fact that each person prefers the region in which they are living and tends to run down the other regions is recognised by the islanders. One woman, M., who lived at the west for sixteen years with her husband, and has returned to live with her brothers at the east, was praising the west, and a western woman heard her and said, "Well that's the first time I've heard a woman from the east praising the west." This shows too how slow is the rate of assimilation of people from a different region into one's own region. M. had lived sixteen years as a neighbour to the other woman, yet was still regarded by her as an easterner, though she had only just returned to live at the east.

There is a surprisingly detached attitude towards the other regions. One woman from the east said to me how lonely and wild it must be out at the west, though she was only half a mile east of the dividing line between the two regions. Another woman, talking of the cooperation between the northern farmers, asked me "Do they help each other like that out at the west?" (where I lived at the time).

THE ROAD TO THE WEST.



The road leading from the west to the Quay, showing the scattered settlement pattern, and parts of the villages of Kille and Lecarrow. This is the most densely populated part of the island.

There is a belief in the identification of people from the same region. An eastern woman who has lived at the west for several years says, for instance, that the western people are "much straighter". In general the westerners have the reputation in the other two regions, of being more boorish and uncivilised than the rest of the islanders and constant slighting references are made to their behaviour, manners and appearance. "They are queer people up at the west," the other islanders say. The westerners are reputed to be in a state of constant feud with their neighbours, and to be on non-speaking terms for years with people with whom they have quarrelled. In fact there are no such cases of feuds or disputes at the west, whereas at the north, and at the east, there are two cases of disputes which have led to the people concerned refusing to speak to each other for several years.

The westerners are slower to criticise than the easterners and northerners. Though I have heard frequent adverse remarks about the character of the western people from occupants of the other regions, I have never heard the westerners make similar adverse remarks about the other islanders. It seems too that the western region has a greater sense of unity and cohesion than the others. A woman, who moved on marriage to live with her husband at the west, compared the westerners very favourably with the easterners, saying that they are always anxious for you to drop into their houses for a cup of tea and a chat, and you cannot do this so easily at the east, because the people are less friendly to each other. A western woman also said that the people of her region are more friendly than those, "on the other

side of the chapel," who visit each other much less frequently. There certainly appears to be a more informal and friendly attitude within the western region than there is in the other two regions.

The division between the east and west regions is shown clearly on Sunday mornings when the east and west men form two separate groups outside the chapel. The western men stand inside the churchyard by the western gate, while men from the east gather at the eastern gate. Though during the week men from the two regions mingle freely together at the pub and will stop to talk together if they should meet on the road, on Sunday the division between the two regions is formalised by the refusal of the two groups to intermingle. A man from the east may arrive at chapel to find he is the first of his group to arrive, yet he will not join the group of westerners, but prefers to remain alone, waiting for the men of his own region to arrive.

In theory there is no reason why a man from the west group should not join the east group, but in fact this does not happen. One western girl denied that the groups were exclusively composed of east, or of west, men, but at the same time, admitted that the easterners always stayed by the east gate - "They wouldn't come over to our side because they would feel strange to be there."

The northern region has a much smaller population than the other two regions. In general the north men join with the easterners in their attitude to the west and their opinions about the westerners, and it is usual for them to join the group standing at the east gate, but there is no fixed rule about this. The north

men have a greater degree of mobility than the men of the other regions since they can move freely from one group to another and do not feel obliged to remain with one group all the time. They will tend to affiliate themselves to the group in which they have their particular friends with whom they enjoy talking, and may move on to the other group if they become bored, or see someone there with whom they want to discuss a business deal.

The men usually arrive at chapel before the women and line up along the wall in their two groups to watch the women hurrying past, their eyes averted, too embarrassed to acknowledge even their husbands or brothers. When the bell rings the men file slowly inside the chapel where they stand at the back, or in the actual porch, instead of occupying the seats, so that they can be the first out. By the time the women start to come out after the service the men are ranged along the wall again, but the women do not stop to speak to them, though they may now exchange a quick greeting with close kin or neighbours as they walk past. The men deny that they are watching and criticising the women and say they are "Just standing". Once the women have left the churchyard and are standing outside the church gate talking together on the road, the groups become less silent as the men move about, smoking and talking to each other, sometimes lingering there for an hour or more after Mass. The talk is chiefly of farming matters. It is the time for the exchange of news, gossip and ideas and for business deals to be contracted between the islanders. The church groups provide an opportunity for the men of the same region to assert their solidarity and to increase their contact with each other. The younger men are able to meet

the older men in a friendly, informal situation and to learn the traditions of the island way of life through discussion with them.

The church groups provide a mechanism for the transmission of the island culture from one generation to the next, and are important in this respect since the opportunities for social interaction between the islanders are becoming fewer and the opportunities for the transmission of the knowledge of the older men to the younger is virtually limited to these Sunday meetings, and to occasional discussions in visiting houses in winter.

Strong though the unity between people of the same region is, the feeling of unity between people of the same village is even stronger. The villages used to be organised on the "rundale" system by which the villagers held their land in common (see Chapter 2) and were bound together by ties of common ownership of land and a strong communal feeling. The closely knit cluster of houses in a rundale village was replaced by the Congested Districts Board in 1896 by farms, each on their own strip of land, separated from each other by a distance of as much as half a mile in some cases.

Edwards¹ remarks, that "When the farms were "striped" and the people scattered in isolated houses much of that social and community sense was lost." The feeling of village unity which still exists today in spite of the scattered settlement pattern, stems from the "rundale" village organisation which encouraged habits of constant and close association between the people of a village.

The islanders have great affection for their own village,

1. R.D. Edwards & T.O. Williams. The Great Famine, op. cit.

and contrast it favourably with all the other villages. There are traditions of one village being better or worse than another in various respects; the people of Cappnagower, for instance, are all thought to be extremely ugly.

As one girl replied to her mother, who had said that their village was "The nicest village on the island," that the villagers were ideal neighbours, and that all the time she has lived in the village no one has ever been on bad terms with anyone else, "Sure everyone says that about their own village." Another woman praised the children of her village, "All the children in our village are the best and nicest on the island." The term "our village" is used by everyone when talking of the village in which they live.

There is a strong bond between people of the same village which is exemplified by the following incident. A young girl from Lecarrow had a disagreement with a woman from Strake, who accused her of eavesdropping outside the door of M., another Strake woman. The girl said that it was no use explaining to M. that she had not been eavesdropping because her accuser was "older than I am and she's from the same village."

This bond continues to exist even when one, or perhaps both the people concerned have moved into different villages, on marriage for example. One woman who lived in Cappnagower and is now living in Ballytuohy says of her old neighbour from Cappnagower, now living in Strake, "I think she is nicer than the rest of the people at the west. Every time I meet her at Mass she has a great welcome for me, even though she's left Cappnagower a long time now."

Though it is usual for people to confine the circle of people within which they visit to kin, in some instances the tie of common membership of the same village is almost as strong a determinant in visiting as are kinship ties. One woman at the north said that if ever she is at the west she would visit B, whose mother lived in her own village, and R who lived there too, before her marriage, "And of course I'd visit John's wife - she's my cousin." The feeling of affection and loyalty that exists between people born in the same village is comparable to the dispersed kinship ties between kin in different parts of the island. It is a dispersed village community.

The mutual aid that takes place between neighbours in the same village is a constant expression of the bond that exists between them. An instance of such cooperation occurred during a few days of storms and high winds in the middle of the summer of 1957. High seas were threatening to smash the three curraghs used for lobster fishing by the men of Ballytuohy, which were anchored in the cove. One man, seeing the danger, sent another to summon all the men of the village to pull the curraghs to safety. Even those men who had no curraghs of their own, and no interest in lobster fishing, and one man whose curragh had been washed away to sea the day before by the storm, came to help. They all combined to assist the owners of the remaining curraghs to haul them to safety. This is a typical instance of island cooperation, when even those who have nothing to gain do not spare themselves in giving help to fellow villagers who need it.

There are very few intra-village activities from which the rest of the islanders, as non-villagers, are excluded, but those

that exist serve to demonstrate, both to the villagers themselves and to the rest of the islanders, the unity of the village in question. This unity may not always be apparent in everyday life but it is brought out on ceremonial occasions such as the "Stations", and the station dance, which are the most significant of intra-village activities. At the time of the "stations", in spring and autumn, it is the turn of one of the houses in the village to "hold the station" - to open their house to the whole village for the celebration of Mass, to provide breakfast for the villagers and perhaps to give a dance in the evening.

The people of the village all help the family which is having the station, "the station house", to prepare for the ceremony. The women will come in to help clean the house and scrub the floor, the men lend lamps and carry benches from their houses to provide extra seats for the guests, and every house sends the station house gifts of butter, cakes or eggs for the breakfast. If there is going to be a dance in the evening, to which the rest of the island will be invited, the villagers will take a special pride in sending the station house the best food they can provide to entertain the guests invited by those who are holding the stations. There is a feeling of pride in upholding the reputation of being a village in which there is always a good station dance, and a feeling of shame if many houses in the village are unable either to have the service in the morning, but have to "send the station to the chapel," or if there are very few houses in the village where the people will be willing to have a dance as well as the traditional breakfast after mass. The villages in which every family holds a dance, when it is their

turn, assisted in the preparation by all the villagers, and where no one takes the station to the chapel, are the most well-integrated. In helping a station house to prepare for all the celebrations neighbours, unless they belong to the same village, are excluded from the activities, however friendly they may be with the owner of the station house, unless they also happen to be close kin, in which case they may help.

The "stations" provide the villagers with an opportunity to act as hosts in providing entertainment for the rest of the islanders at the dance, and the pride that they take in making a good impression as a village, on the rest of the islanders, is a manifestation of the feeling of village unity.

The only other occasion on which the villagers combine together and from which the other islanders are excluded is at a funeral. When a man is dying his kin will spend the night sitting with him, waiting for his death, and when he has died they will remain in the house all night with the body until the burial next morning. They will be joined in this vigil, the "wake", by the people of the dying man's village, who will remain in the house of mourning all night with the corpse and the kin, whereas the rest of the islanders who come to pay their respects to the dead will leave several hours before dawn.

When a man dies his kin are expected to provide some of the more important people who attend the burial, such as the big farmers, innkeeper, mail boat owner and doctor, with drinks of whisky, and here again the villagers collaborate to help the bereaved kin of a fellow villager by providing them with money to buy the necessary whisky.

The islander's love of the island as a whole, and more particularly of his own region, and his own village, is given its fullest expression in the attachment he feels towards his own particular place of birth and the land associated with it. The usual term for the farm on which a person is born is the "old place," and association with it remains important even after a long absence from the island. It was naturally assumed by a woman that her brother, paying a visit to the island after thirty years absence in the States, would stay at the "old place" where he was born, though his parents had long since died, and his brother and family lived there in crowded conditions which would make such a visit inconvenient. In spite of the fact that the visitor could have stayed with less inconvenience with his other brother, or his sister and her husband, it was regarded by all as natural that he should want to stay at the "old place," and in fact he did so. As one woman expressed it, "Where a person's born and where a person's reared, that's where they'd want to be."

One man of sixty, who was compelled to leave his farm at the west, through illness, and to go to live with his wife's brothers at the Quay, when asked how he liked living at the east, replied, "It's a difficult thing to transplant an old tree," a typical island reaction towards being uprooted from one's own land. This love for one's place of birth is not dispelled even by a long absence from the island. One islander, who was evicted from his home by the landlord in the nineteenth century, and who emigrated to Chicago, where he became an alderman, and ran a very successful business, used to return every few years to

the island and spend a long time wandering round the ruins of his old home, and walking the land on which he played as a child.

So strong is the tie that a person feels with the "old place" that the islanders continue to recognise the association between the land and its owner long after the occupying family have died or emigrated. Houses long deserted, frequently no more than ruined shells among the bogs, are still referred to by the name of the original owner. One house on the road to the chapel, which has been deserted for over 45 years, is still known as "Mary Jimmy's", another, of which merely the foundations are left, as "John Nancy's," and a comparatively recently deserted house, abandoned for only 14 years, as "John Mary Barratt's."

This feeling, that the land, and especially the house, are still associated with the original owner, who has either emigrated, or long since died, leads to the refusal of island families, even those living in very overcrowded conditions, to move into an empty house. If left deserted, a perfectly sound house is allowed to fall into disrepair, and eventual ruin, rather than be taken over by a needy family. For instance there is one family, consisting of a man, his wife, seven children, and wife's parents, all living in a three roomed cottage, with an empty cottage within easy access of the holding, into which the younger man and his family could move. He shares the islanders's feeling about occupying a deserted house - he thinks of the owners, it is "still their house," and there is always the feeling that they may come back and occupy it. Many people said to me that they would be afraid to occupy a deserted house as I had done, "I'd be afraid of seeing William," (the last owner) they said.

Even if a man can claim kinship with the original owner of a deserted house, this does not give him the right to appropriate property from the house or to use the land without asking the owner's permission and offering to pay rent. Public opinion on this matter is so strong that when a man left his house and went to live in Galway his cousins, living nearby, came at dead of night to strip the house of its portable furnishings. They did not do so in daylight because they were afraid of being condemned for their actions by the neighbours, even though they were first cousins to the owner.

An elderly spinster, living in a thatched roofed house in very poor repair, waited until the roof began to leak and cave in, and then, as she had no one to repair it for her, she moved into the house next door, a slate roofed house in good repair, whose owner, a first cousin of hers, had emigrated many years ago to America. Though this seemed a natural thing to do in the circumstances, it caused much unfavourable comment on the island. As one man said, "There was as much fuss made as if she'd moved into the Crystal Palace, and if it hadn't been that it had a slate roof it would have been in ruins long ago."

This feeling does not only apply to the house, but to the land as well. A man, when he emigrates, is very reluctant to sell his land. "Owners of farms don't sell them for various reasons. They leave them unoccupied so that they can come back—they have a feeling that they may return sometime and by selling they break the link with home," an island farmer explained to me.

The social structure of Clare Island is not a tangible concept. The villages have no central focal point, such as a village square, no boundaries separate them one from another; there are no walls or paths to mark off one region from another. The only way in which the social structure can be perceived is in the attitude of the islanders themselves, in the feelings of loyalty and unity which exist between people of the same village, people of the same region, and most of all, between the islanders as a whole, in relation to non-islanders.

The social structure of any society is determined primarily by two factors, the attachment of the individual to the land, and the attachment of the individual to his kin group. In a society where membership of a kin group is synonymous with common residence in a specific region, or village, there is unlikely to be any conflict of loyalties between a man's obligations to his kin, and to his neighbours, since his neighbours will also be his kin. In Clare Island there is no such system. Kindred do not reside together on common territory, but are dispersed throughout the island. A man is affiliated to his patrilineal and matrilineal kin groups, and at the same time, to his own particular village, which may, or may not, contain his kindred. Such a situation might be expected to lead to a conflict of loyalties, but in fact there are very few occasions on which the individual's loyalties are divided between his attachment to his kin, and his attachment to the people with whom he resides, his neighbours.

However, on the rare occasions on which kinship ties clash with ties of locality, kinship ties override local ties. At the

"stations" for instance, neighbours who are not fellow villagers of the host will, however friendly they may be with him, be prevented from participating in the preparations of the host and his family for the dance. whereas the host's kin, even if they are from a different village, will be permitted to participate in the preparation. Though the ties between neighbours are strong, and the feeling of obligation one has to help them very great, nevertheless a man will always help his kin before his neighbours, if they should both ask for his help at the same time, even if his kin happen to live in a different village and he would have to travel further to help them than he would his neighbours. Similarly, as will be seen in the following chapter, a man prefers that, on his death, his land should be inherited by a kinsman, however distant, rather than by an unrelated neighbour.

In this chapter I have discussed the ties of locality, the attachment the islanders feel for the island, for their own regions, and especially for their own village, and the feeling they have of belonging to the land.

In the following chapter I shall show how the ties of kinship exercise an even greater power over the individual than ties of locality.

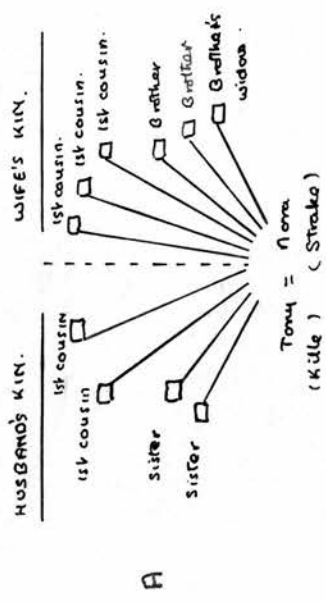
CHAPTER 8

THE CONCEPT OF "FRIENDSHIP."

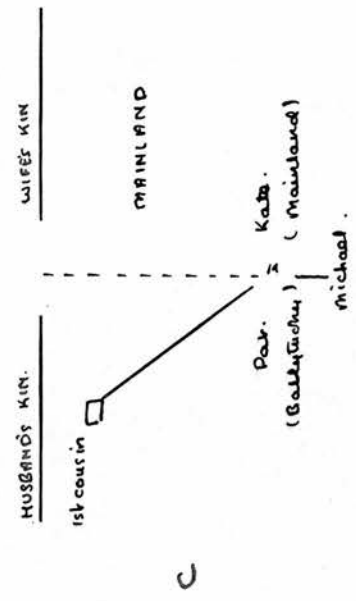
The term "friend" is used throughout the west of Ireland to apply to one's kinsfolk rather than to friends or acquaintances with whom neither consanguineal nor affinal relationships can be established. If any mention is made of a "friend" it is assumed that the person so referred to is in fact a kinsman. There is a sharp distinction made on the island between a "friend" with whom one can establish a bond of kinship, and a friend with whom one cannot. One woman showed me a photograph of a girl and on my enquiring whether this girl was a friend of hers she replied quickly "Oh no, she isn't a friend, just a pal of mine." The next day she announced that she was going to a memorial mass for a "friend." It subsequently emerged that the "friend" was her deceased sister-in-law.

"Friend" is used on the island as a general term for a relative with whom either consanguineal or affinal relationships can be established, and it is used to refer to anyone who comes into this category, whether patrilineal or matrilineal relatives - to sisters, aunts, uncles-in-law, cousins, wife's cousins and so on. Nevertheless there is a well developed kinship terminology and a consciousness of the different degrees of relationship. When referring to a kinsman the islanders take trouble to use the correct terms, speaking of "second cousin", or "third cousin," making a sharp differentiation between such relatives, instead of referring vaguely to a person as a "cousin", and they reckon relationships as far as fourth or fifth cousins. "You know how it is with the Irish - they don't just count as far as the first or even second cousins but right up to the seventh

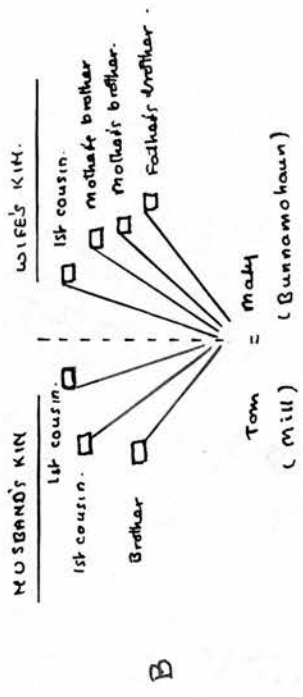
DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW MARRIAGES BETWEEN ISLAND MEN AND MAINLAND WOMEN RESULT, IN THE NEXT GENERATION, IN A DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF KIN ON THE ISLAND.



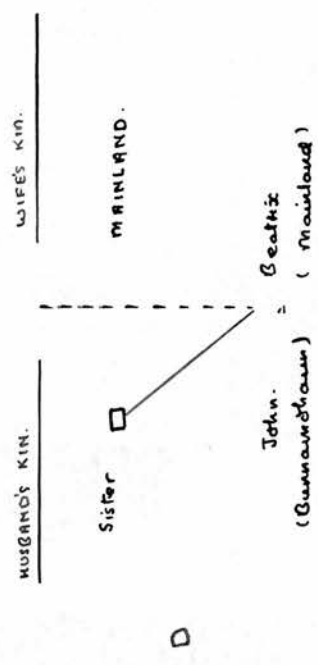
TONY AND NORA ARE BOTH ISLANDERS, WITH SIBLINGS AND FIRST COUSINS ON THE ISLAND. THEIR CHILDREN, CONSEQUENTLY, HAVE A LARGE NUMBER OF BOTH CLOSE PATRILINEAL AND CLOSE MATRILINEAL KIN ON THE ISLAND.



MICHAEL'S FATHER AND FATHER'S FATHER BOTH MARRIED MAINLAND WIVES. CONSEQUENTLY HIS FATHER'S MATRILINEAL KIN, AS WELL AS HIS OWN, ARE ON THE MAINLAND LAND. SINCE HIS SIBLINGS HAVE EMIGRATED, THE ONLY KINSMAN HE HAS ON THE ISLAND IS HIS SECOND COUSIN. (SON OF FATHER'S FIRST COUSIN, NOW DEAD). THIS SHOWS HOW MARRIAGES TO MAINLAND WOMEN OVER 2 GENERATIONS, LEAD TO A LOSS OF ISLAND KIN FOR THE 3RD GENERATION.



TOM AND MARY, BOTH ISLANDERS, ALSO HAVE A LARGE NUMBER OF CLOSE KIN ON THE ISLAND. MARY HAS NO SIBLINGS BUT HER FATHER'S BROTHER AND MOTHER'S BROTHERS ARE STILL SURVIVING. THEIR CHILDREN HAVE A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF PATRILINEAL AND MATRILINEAL KIN ON THE ISLAND.



JOHN'S FATHER AND FATHER'S FATHER ALSO MARRIED MAINLAND WIVES, CONSEQUENTLY JOHN'S ONLY KINSMAN ON THE ISLAND IS HIS SISTER. AS A RESULT JOHN'S CHILDREN HAVE NO MATRILINEAL KIN ON THE ISLAND, AND ONLY ONE PATRILINEAL KINSMAN, THEIR FATHER'S SISTER.

degree," said one islandman.

The islanders are linked together by a network of kinship relationships which have been brought about by generations of island marriages, and by the comparative rarity of marriages of islandmen to mainland women. There are very few families who cannot establish relationships of some sort, either consanguineal or affinal, with almost every other family on the island. The only families who have very few close relatives are those in which marriages to mainland women have taken place. If a man makes such a marriage his children will have only half the number of kin on the island that children whose parents are both islanders will have, since all their matrilineal kin will be on the mainland. This lack of kin is especially noticeable when mainland women have married into the family for two generations, i.e. if the father and son both marry mainland wives. Two second cousins, both of whom had mainland grandmothers (father's father's wife) and mainland mothers, have no kin on the island now except each other, since their matrilineal kin live on the mainland, and their siblings have emigrated.

The diagram shows the way in which the number of kin a man has is determined, not only by the size of his father's and mother's sibling groups, and the number of his own siblings, now living on the island, but also by the number of mainland marriages that have taken place in his family. In family A there have been no recent (within the last 100 years) mainland marriages, and both mother and father have siblings living on the island, consequently they can claim relationships with a considerable number of people. In family B there have been no recent mainland marriages and the father has two

brothers living on the island, but the mother has no siblings, and consequently the children have closer relatives on the father's side than on the mother's. In family C, M.'s father and grandfather both married mainland women and neither he nor his father have any siblings living on the island, and this has led to a total lack of close relatives. In family D there have also been mainland marriages of a similar character, and if it were not for the father's sister the family would have no kin at all on the island.

People who have few close kin on the island are regarded as being in a very unfortunate position, since kin are regarded as a great blessing. "It's terribly hard not to have any kin," people say about B. whose kin are all dead, and who is pitied by everyone because she is so much alone.

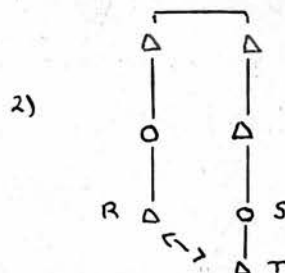
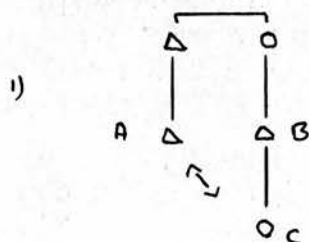
Though the islanders are well aware of the correct kinship terms they tend to use the term "friend" loosely to apply to anyone with whom kinship can be traced. One woman, explaining why an Inishturk man always stayed at their house when he came to Clare, said it was because his mother and her mother were related, "and it's on account of the friendship there was between them that he stays with us."

"She's my own friend - her mother and mine were second cousins," says one woman of another.

There is no differentiation made between matrilineal and patrilineal kin in the terminology, equal importance being given to both. The terminology is limited to father, mother, brother, sister, uncle and aunt (used to refer to either father's or mother's siblings. Such terms as "mother's brother" or "father's sister," are seldom used) grandfather, grandmother, grand uncle and grand aunt (grandparents' siblings,) first, second and third cousins, "five akin"

and "seven akin" cousins.

The term "five akin," is used to apply to the relationship which exists between Ego and his mother's or father's first cousin, and the term "seven akin," to the relationship which exists between Ego and his mother's or father's second cousin.



In Diagram 1 A and B are first cousins and the relationship between A and C is described as "five akin". A and C are "five akin" cousins.

In Diagram 2 R and S are second cousins and the relationship between R and T is described as "seven akin". R and T are "seven akin" cousins.

There is a differentiation made in the terminology between consanguineal and affinal kin. The terms "uncle" and "aunt" are not used to refer to the spouses of mother's or father's siblings. I asked one girl of sixteen a question about C. her father's sister's husband, referring to him as her "uncle". She was surprised and did not know who I meant, though she has no uncle apart from C. on the island. She asked her mother, "Is C. my uncle?" and her mother explained that he was an "uncle by marriage" whereas his wife was a "real aunt". Her mother explained, "P. hasn't learnt these things yet." In the terminology people differentiate affinal relatives from consanguineal relatives by adding the suffix "in-law" to the normal kinship term. A woman will never, for instance, call her brother's wife or husband's sister "sister" but always "sister-in-law".

I asked one girl of fourteen which of her uncles she preferred. She made no mention of her uncles-in-law when discussing the relative merits of the other uncles, showing that she regarded an uncle in a different category from an uncle-in-law.

In referring to "friends" a distinction is made between "far out", or distant relatives, and "near-to", or close relatives. Any one beyond a first cousin is regarded as a far out relative, for instance a five akin cousin is a "far out friend." Such a term is frequently used when people are not sure of the proper relationship but know that the "friend" concerned is not a close one - "Michael is a far out friend," etc. When a man is thought to be related to another the islanders will say "he must be something to X," and conversely if he is not related, "he is nothing to X."

There is a very strong belief in the unity of the kin group, whether it be matrilineal or patrilineal, expressed in such remarks as, "They have plenty of friends, the Learys, the Morans - aren't they all the one? and the sort of people who always help each other when they're in trouble?" It is thought that characteristics present in one member of the kin group are present, or likely to be present, in all its members. If one member of the group is tainted in any way then all the members are likely to be similarly affected. Such a belief presents an analogy with the Tallensi¹ concept of the unity of the "soog" group and the belief that if one member of the "soog" is tainted with witchcraft then every member of the group is likely to be similarly affected.

1. Meyer Fortes. The Web of Kinship Among the Tallensi. Oxford University Press, London 1949.

One girl said of a man from the mainland who came in to visit them, that she does not know how he persuaded his wife to marry him, "Because he's terribly ugly and queer looking," adding in embarrassment, "but he's a friend of ours." Another woman remarked that both B and N are "cracked" (mad) but that this is not surprising because, "aren't they first cousins?"

One woman is regarded with amusement because she claims everyone as her cousin, "Even if they were seven akin cousins they'd be first cousins to Mary Ann", laughs one man. A seven akin cousin is considered a very "far out" relative, and to claim such a person as first cousin is thought rather ridiculous, especially when it is done in order to heighten one's own status. This woman claims close relationships with distant relatives of high status such as nuns, priests and mainland shopkeepers, since by doing so she is laying claim for higher status for herself as a member of the same kin group as such people. If your cousin is of high status then you, potentially, are also of high status, and conversely, if he is of low status, you, far from trying to claim a still closer relationship with him, try to disclaim all relationship, if you have aspirations to high status.

Because of this belief in the unity of the kin group, there is a great sense of family loyalty on the island. When talking a man must take great care that he does not make an unfavourable comment about a person in the hearing of that person's relatives, however distant, unless he intends to provoke a quarrel. People are as sensitive about criticism of a relative as they are about criticisms of themselves, and they are as quick to defend a relative's reputation

as they are to defend their own, if either is threatened. One islander told me how careful everyone has to be not to make a mistake and criticise someone in the presence of any of his "friends."

For a fellow islander to forget the relationships between people and to make a mistake of this sort is regarded as inexcusable, though such a mistake made by a mainlander, who could not be expected to know the relationship, would be regarded as excusable, and no offence would be taken.

This loyalty is carried to such extremes that in one case I even found a woman defending a relative of hers against her husband when her husband, as a joke, said her first cousin was a drunkard who could not hold his drink. She contradicted this statement hotly, contending that her cousin was ill, and not drunk, and was very offended. The husband's observation was based on fact, but the wife resented a slur being cast on a member of her family. Yet she had frequently abused her cousin to me for his stupidity and said, "He makes me sick with all his talking and shouting." Though I found people very willing to tell me about the defects in their own family they resented it very strongly if anyone else outside the elementary family mentioned such defects to me. The stepmother of a mentally defective man was extremely offended when her sister-in-law told me about the man's mental state, though she was perfectly willing to tell me herself.

This feeling of family pride and loyalty, and the fear that if one member of the family is in any way abnormal, the other members of the family are also considered likely to be, leads to the attempt to disguise such abnormalities. One brother and sister tolerated

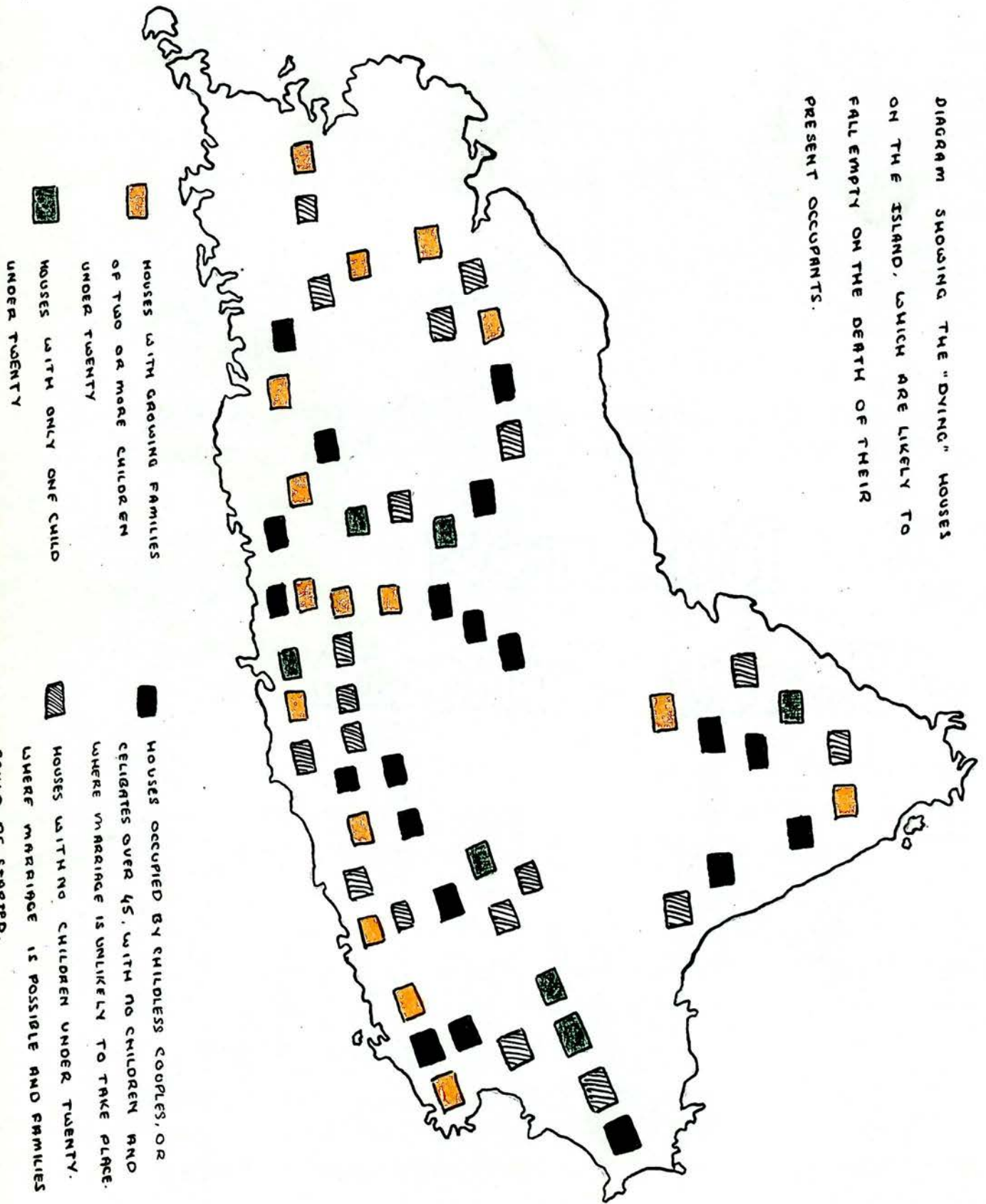
the presence of their dangerously insane brother in the house for several years rather than admit that he was insane by sending him to hospital on the mainland, finally being forced to do so when he almost succeeded in killing his sister.

People are expected to praise their kin and not to criticise them, and if they do occasionally criticise them excuse themselves for doing so. A. criticised the behaviour of C. and her son W., and then said, "Well now, I'm criticising them and they're friends of mine so I suppose I shouldn't - C. is my mother's first cousin." "You wouldn't think much of Pat if you knew him as well as we do, though I shouldn't say that since he's our cousin," said another woman.

Disputes are occasionally caused because of this feeling of kingroup loyalty, by such incidents as the slighting reference to a man's sister in England who had a bastard, and the implication that the man would be likely to be tarred with the same brush, and by similar insults to a man's sister who was living with a coloured man in England. In both cases the brothers avenged the insult by fighting the aggressors.

These insults are rarely made in cold blood. Most frequently they occur at the pub when the effect of several hours drinking has resulted in taboos and restrictions on behaviour becoming relaxed a little. The idea of one member of a kin group committing a moral lapse and "infecting" the others, who are consequently, to a lesser degree, held culpable for the moral lapse, is probably due to the subconscious, or perhaps conscious feeling, that the kin group is regarded as one person, "Aren't they all the one?"

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE "DYING" HOUSES
ON THE ISLAND, WHICH ARE LIKELY TO
FALL EMPTY ON THE DEATH OF THEIR
PRESENT OCCUPANTS.



Since the son who inherits the farm from his parents must support them on the farm until they die, if he marries before their death, the average family is most likely to be a three generation one, composed of the old parents, their son, his wife, and the son's children. Yet because of the tendency to postpone marriage until the death of the old parents, or in recent years, not to marry at all, only four of the sixty one families on the island are three generation families. There are seventeen elementary families, composed of husband, wife and children, in three cases with the husband's brother also in the house, in one the husband's mother's brother, and in another the husband's sister. There are eighteen incomplete elementary families where one of the parents is dead, eight families composed of two or more unmarried siblings, five childless couples, eight houses in which celibates live alone and one in which a man lives with his mother's brother.

It can be seen that the three generation families and the complete elementary families form only a third of the total number of families, two thirds being incomplete families, in many of which there is no possibility of marriage, or, if the house is occupied by a married couple, of young children being born. It is likely in these cases that when the present occupiers die out there will be no-one to replace them and the houses will be left untenanted.

One of the most forcible illustrations of the islanders' attitude towards kinship obligations is the way in which sons and daughters are willing to sacrifice their own lives and opportunities to stay and look after their old parents. Many children with good jobs in England or America, hearing that their parents need help on

the island farm, will return home without any resentment.

The islanders believe that "age demands respect," and the general attitude towards the aged, and in particular to one's own parents, is one of respect. There is an almost complete absence of the feeling that the old people are being selfish in expecting their children to stay with them and look after them in their old age. One man with a good job as a carpenter in England was recalled home by his father when the father became too ill to work on the farm, and, "He came back to look after his old father - what else could he do?"

Occasionally people express the view that the old people should let their children lead their own lives, or else go to live with their children in the country in which they are working, instead of expecting them to return to the island. "The old people used to be very contrary - they used to think of no one but themselves and when you're young you don't think for yourself," "The old people won't go and they expect a son or daughter to stay with them and sacrifice their life - they oughtn't to and it's not right, but they do", and people say, "Oh the poor old woman, how could she leave her home"- so what can you do?" One woman says of her bachelor brother, who was recalled from the States to look after his mother, "It's hard on Tommy - he's seen such a lot of the world and then he had to come back and look after the mother - he feels it now."

In general no distinction is made between the old people who are still fit and capable of work, and those who are not. They are all treated in the same way, with respect and affection. The way in which people regard their old parents is exemplified by the attitude of a man of fifty who has nothing but admiration for his eighty year old father who works all day on the land, "Isn't he a great ould

fellow? he plans out as much work on the farm as ever."

Old people are usually given the most comfortable seat by the fire and their wishes considered in every way. One woman whose turn it was to hold the "stations" in her house, did not hold a dance after the service in the morning because her father's old sister was living with her and did not like noise, "It's difficult to have a dance in the house if you have an old person in it who doesn't like dancing." This sacrifice of a long-anticipated social occasion, made for an aged relative, shows the degree of consideration that is usually shown to the aged on the island. The islanders condemn the mainlanders for sending old, senile or infirm people to the county home, instead of looking after them at home, "The people on the mainland would do that, but the people on this island wouldn't do it."

The bond between children and their parents is very strong - as one man said, it is foolish to quarrel with your parents because, "If you are in trouble of any sort they are the very first people to help you. No one is a greater help to you than your parents."

The attitude towards one's mother is expressed by such remarks as, "There's no one as close to you as your mother," "A mother makes the home. If you had to come home to a father and brother you wouldn't want to - there's no home, and if you had sixteen sisters they wouldn't take the place of a mother." One man came in for a great deal of censure because when his mother was dangerously ill in a mainland hospital he did not go out and stay on the mainland so that he could be near her, but hurried home again to finish the harvest. "Hay and oats, won't they always be there long after we've gone?" "Wouldn't any man, however poor he was, want to be with his mother when she was like that, and they're not poor at all - the mother has

twelve hundred pounds in the bank herself - isn't that an unnatural thing to do to come home again?"

A boy tends to confide more in his mother than in his father and asks favours from her such as money to buy drink and cigarettes, or permission to go to a dance.

The bond between the father and his children is founded on the children's respect for him rather than their affection. One girl, who invents untrue items of gossip and tells them to her father in the hope that he will retail them to other people and make himself ridiculous in so doing, is regarded as very unfilial, "It's a terrible thing to do, to make a fool of your father like that."

Though a boy will cheerfully hail a girl if he is working alone, and stop work to exchange a few words with her, if his father is working with him, he will lower his head and ignore her. People say this is because boys are "afraid of their fathers."

Though "age demands respect", in practice the treatment which the aged receive at the hands of their children may not conform to the ideal behaviour pattern. There are three families on the island which exemplify the contrast that can exist in the treatment of the aged, the contrast between the ideal behaviour, and universally condemned behaviour.

Martin is a widower of ninety, crippled with rheumatism. He spends the day sleeping in his room or sitting in the best chair by the fire in the kitchen. The family live in the usual three roomed house, with a kitchen and two other rooms, one of which is occupied by Martin, the other by his son, his son's wife and their seven children, all under fifteen. Martin's daughter-in-law takes great pride in him, telling strangers proudly, "This is the oldest old man in the island,"

and praising his exploits as a seaman when he was a young man. She and her husband have taught their children to respect Martin. When he appears at the door of his room, and makes his way to the fire, the children, who have been sitting in the comfortable fireside chair, immediately jump up and help him into the chair, guiding his groping hands to its arms, and helping him to lower himself into it. If he takes his pipe out of his pocket a child will hold his tobacco tin while he fills it, and another child runs to find a piece of paper to light it for him.

People praise this family for the way in which they treat the old man and contrast the behaviour of two other families to their "old one", as the old person of the house is called, very unfavourably. Whereas Martin has the bigger of the two bedrooms for his own, and yet is always welcome in the kitchen, John, another old widower, has to share a room with his two grandchildren, while his son and his wife have a room of their own, and has to submit to familiarity and ridicule, not only from his son's wife, but from his grandchildren, all of whom resent his presence in the house and make no attempt to hide their resentment.

Michael and his wife, both eighty years of age, live in their own house with their only daughter, her husband Tommy and their eight grandchildren. They are confined to their own small room, where they sleep and where Michael does all the cooking on a primus stove, since they have no fire, and his wife is an invalid. They are virtually forbidden to enter the kitchen, except as a means of getting to and from their room, and are made to feel like intruders in their own home, having to endure rudeness and insults from their son-in-law, daughter and grandchildren. Recently the son-in-law tried to beat

BROTHER AND SISTER.



In appearance these siblings are typical islanders, with fair skins and medium brown hair. Note their self-consciousness when being photographed. Very few islanders will consent to being photographed.

They are sitting on a piece of driftwood they have rescued from the sea.

the old woman as she lay in bed, with a stick, and knocked down Michael and cut his hand, when he came to his wife's help. Public opinion against Tommy for this treatment of the old people is very strong - "A man who could use violence on his mother-in-law, an old woman getting the pension, should be sent to jail - it's horrible." He is regarded as a "savage" - "It's a terrible thing that the two old people have to live down in the room all the time like that, wouldn't you think one of those great slashers of daughters of Tommy's would bake a cake for their old grandfather sometimes." Such behaviour towards old people is universally condemned.

The tie between siblings varies in its strength from family to family. Emigration means that as the children reach an age to leave the island they will emigrate and become separated from their siblings, in many cases for ever, and this leads to a certain degree of detachment between siblings. One woman was very vague about how many brothers and sisters she had, "Oh, about seven," and another said her siblings had been in England and America for so long that she had forgotten how many she had and would have to count them to be sure. In most cases, however, even when people have emigrated and have not seen their island siblings for many years, they will still keep in close touch with them, writing regularly, sending gifts and money, and often returning home to visit them after thirty years absence.

Though the closeness of the tie between siblings who have emigrated and those who are left on the island may vary from family to family, there is great affection between siblings who remain on the island, especially those who live together. One spinster living with her bachelor brother says, "A brother is more protection to you than a sister," - she waits on him while he eats his meals, gets up

early on Sunday morning to clean his shoes, lay out his best suit for him to wear to Mass, making sure there is a clean handkerchief and a rosary in his pocket.

Sisters regard it as their duty to look after their brothers when their parents die, if the brothers are not married. It is often the case that a sister is obliged to keep house for her bachelor brother, who shows no inclination to marry, and in doing so sacrifices her own chances of marriage. One girl of thirty-five would emigrate to England were it not that her brother refuses to marry and she cannot leave him and her old father unless he does so. A woman of forty emigrated to America to live with her sister, who paid her passage there, leaving her bachelor brother to look after himself, but returned to the island in a few weeks because she felt she could not leave her brother alone - "That was an awful thing to do, to leave my brother alone - I suppose I shouldn't have done it."

The affection between sisters is very strong. It is regarded as terrible not to have a sister. One woman, who hates island life, says "It wouldn't be so bad if I had a sister here, but I've no one to talk to." Sisters help each other with the housework, look after each other's children in cases of illness, and help each other to prepare for dances. When a woman is going to hold a dance in her house, her sister will spend several days helping with the cleaning and baking, will help to serve the guests at the tea, and to welcome them.

When sisters become old and live in different regions of the island it is often difficult for them to go and visit each other, and for many of them the only time when they see each other regularly, is after Mass on Sundays, when they will chat together and exchange

news at the gate of the churchyard.

The contact between brothers is probably less close than that between sisters, or brothers and sisters. They may drink together at the pub, but they will frequent each other's houses less. Two brothers in their sixties, C. and W., live only half a mile from each other, yet have not seen each other for over a year since C. is an invalid and W. does not like visiting. Their sister, who lives several miles away, visits them both regularly.

There are no formalised rules which regulate the behaviour between a child and its Mother's or father's siblings. There is often affection and even a certain amount of joking familiarity between a child and his uncle or aunt, but the degree of affection between them depends more on individual likes or dislikes than on formalised rules of behaviour. E, a girl of fourteen, has two aunts, her father's sisters, H. and M. She is fond of M. because she is good-tempered, generous and hospitable, and always ready to give E. a large meal whenever she calls. There is no similar feeling of goodwill between E. and H. because H. "won't even ask you in for a cup of tea," and is very unwelcoming. E. dislikes visiting H. and as a result rarely does so. This is an example which shows how the theoretical kinship behaviour varies, in practice, with the personalities of the individuals involved.

When aunts or uncles are ill or in need of any help their nieces and nephews will be ready to help them. One man of eighty was extremely ill and unable to look after himself so his niece and nephew (sister's children) took turns to sleep with him at night, and his niece cycled to the house every day to do his cooking and washing - "He's her uncle so she'll be going to look after him - he's

got no one else."

When a man was ill in the spring and unable to sow his oats and plant his potatoes, his brother's son and his sister's son, and his sister's husband, devoted several days to doing this work for him at the busiest period of the farming year when they could ill afford the time, so that he would not be short of crops later on. Two young girls go and spend a few days periodically with their father's bachelor brothers, to bake and clean up the house for them.

The patterns of kinship behaviour between children and their uncles and aunts, though in theory based on respect and affection, in practice vary according to individual dislikes of the aunt or uncle in question. This applies to an even greater extent to affinal relatives. The degree of affection between affines and the amount of interaction between them is conditioned not only by a person's feeling for the affinal relative, but also by his feeling for the consanguineal relative who provides the link between him and the affines. For instance, B dislikes her brother's widow M. because she is very miserly. M. lives alone and is often short of turf because she is too mean to pay a boy to spend two days or so cutting it for her. B. says "She could have help in plenty - my children would always help her as she's my sister-in-law, but if they bring turf for her she is too mean even to give them a cup of tea and just says, 'be off home with you' and kids like to be talked to, so they won't go again." This is an instance of kinship behaviour which is disrupted because one of the people concerned, M., refuses to behave in the accepted way. So strong does B. feel the obligation to M. to be that a few weeks after she had resolved not to allow her children to help M. again with gifts of turf, she heard M. was without

a fire, and sent her children to take M. a load of turf - "Because she's my brother's wife and for his sake I wouldn't want her to be without a fire - even though he's been dead three years I still feel I shouldn't let her be without."

Another instance of the way in which personal feelings condition the degree of interaction between affines is that of N. and her husband's sisters B. and M. Sisters-in-law are expected to visit each other and N. is willing to visit both B. and M. Recently, however, she has stopped visiting M. because M. will not visit her in return or even call in on her way to the Quay, on the grounds that she is too busy. N. says "If she wouldn't call in and see me, why should I go back and see her or go out and speak to her in the road?" Since visiting is one of the few opportunities for meeting other people that is open to women, and since the circle of people a woman visits is very restricted, to deprive oneself of the pleasure of visiting a house merely because its owner, in this case M., refuses to reciprocate, shows the importance of reciprocity in kinship behaviour, and the reluctance to continue a relationship in which there is no such reciprocity.

Cousins too are expected to visit each other and give help when it is needed. People who have no close relatives to help them will often ask a cousin for the loan of one of his children to help with such tasks as whitewashing the house, running errands and so on. A fourteen year old girl spends every Sunday night with her mother's cousin, an old woman who cannot be left alone in the house, so that her son can go to the pub - "You wouldn't want to stop him - it's the only time he goes out, he doesn't go to the dances or anything," she says. Another woman blames her cousin for being a "mean old thing," because he did not bring her a sack or two of potatoes when she was

short of them in the spring.

There is a feeling that it is wrong for cousins to marry. There is a taboo on the marriage of first cousins, enforced by the Catholic church, but "five akin" cousin marriage is allowed, though it is regarded with disfavour by the islanders, as the couple are thought to be too closely related. There are four married couples on the island at present who are "five akin" cousins. Marriage between second cousins is regarded as more acceptable but not desirable - "I never thought of M. as a boy friend - he was my second cousin" said one woman.

On Valentia Island in Kerry this feeling that marriage between cousins is undesirable, and that between first cousins unthinkable, was illustrated by the following incident. A bachelor of fifty or so was drinking in the bar with a girl, a stranger to the island, and a mad woman who was begging drinks and annoying the customers at the bar came up to him and said, "That's a fine lady you have there - you're a fine man for the ladies aren't you?" to which he replied, "She's a cousin of mine, now will you be quiet!" and at once she muttered apologetically "Oh she's a cousin, that's all right then," and drifted away satisfied. For her, mad as she was, the mere mention of such a kinship tie automatically ruled out the possibility of any sort of sexual relationship.

One of the most important kinship obligations is the mourning of one's kin, because it is a way of expressing respect and regard for them. An islander is expected to attend the wake and the funeral of his "friend." One man and his sisters were deeply offended because, when their mother's brother died in Louisburgh, their kin on the mainland did not notify them of his death and they could not attend his funeral. They regarded this as a grave insult and feel that it

had made them look ridiculous, but more than anything they regretted that they could not show respect for their uncle by attending the funeral. "He wouldn't have liked us not to be at his funeral," said his nephew angrily.

People must not hold dances in their house for a year after a kinsman of theirs has died - this applies to kin as "far out" as a first cousin but not to more distant kin, and similarly, if a close relative dies, they should not go to any other dances, for twelve months if the deceased was a member of their elementary family, and for six months if it was any other close relative. M. wondered whether she should hold a station dance in her house since she was distantly related (second cousin) to B, whose father had died a year ago. She asked the opinion of the neighbours as to whether she would be right to hold the dance and they thought that enough time had elapsed for a dance to be held without causing offence to B. However, on the evening of the dance M was "in very poor order" because at eleven at night all the other women had come except for B, and M. immediately thought that B was offended and was extremely relieved when she eventually arrived and assured her that she was not.

Another obligation incumbent upon kin is to visit each other as frequently as possible. The average woman usually confines the circle of people whom she visits to kin. This exchange of visits between kin is especially important when emigrant kin arrive home. The return of a brother, sister or any close kin from overseas on a visit, especially after a long period of absence, sometimes as much as thirty years, is an occasion of great rejoicing and great preparation. The "old place" in which the emigrant was born is whitewashed inside and out, and paint of the best quality is used to decorate it. "Porter" cakes and other delicacies are baked and a trip will be made to the

mainland to fetch supplies of food. Other close kin of the returning emigrant make similar preparations. The "street" outside the house is weeded and if there is time, resurfaced "because we can't leave it like that when he comes."

Such visits are opportunities for the reaffirming of kinship ties, since people who do not visit each other frequently, if at all, will, if they are related to each other, visit or meet each other when the emigrant comes home.

All his close kin will gather at the Quay to meet him and escort him back to the house in which he is staying, and will go and visit him every night, or as often as they can during his stay. There is a gathering of the kin group in the house in which the visitor is staying almost every evening. The visitor is expected to make visits to his other kin, who prepare special meals for him, and some of whom will probably hold a dance for him. People attach considerable importance to this exchange of visits. Twenty four hours after a girl had arrived for a six week stay from America her neighbour, who is very shy, and dislikes visiting, says she must call on her, as otherwise everyone will think she must have a grudge against the girl and her family, because she and the girl's mother are cousins. Consequently she should call to see her on the first or second day of her arrival.

When the visitor leaves the island all his kin will gather at the Quay again to see him off. The visit of an emigrant provides kin with an opportunity of acknowledging and reaffirming their affiliation to the kin group by this exchange of visits.

Mutual aid is one of the most important functions of the kin group. Among the men it takes the form of the loan of labour or

equipment on the land, and among the women of assistance in the house at any time when it is needed. The loan of children, especially to childless kin, to help in the house, or on the land, is another obligation that one owes to one's kin.

Though kin are expected to give each other help and support whenever necessary and receive no praise for doing so, because it is regarded as natural that they should, nevertheless there is a strong feeling that there must be reciprocity in such relationships even if it is deferred reciprocity. An old man of eighty living at the west who has to walk two miles to the chapel always calls after mass to have lunch with his cousins Mary Ann and John. It has been calculated that he must owe them a considerable amount of money if the price of the meals is reckoned up, since he has been eating there every Sunday for fifty years, but "He is a friend" so he does not need to worry about payment. Yet when his son came home from America on a visit Mary Ann went to his house and was extremely hurt when he distributed presents of clothes to his close relatives, and yet did not remember the kindness Mary Ann and John had shown to his father for so many years. Mary Ann says she would not have minded how small the gift was as long as it was something to show he had remembered this kindness, "Wouldn't you think it wouldn't have hurt him to say, 'Here's a shirt and tie for John,'?" especially since his father and Mary Ann's were first cousins and his mother and hers also first cousins, "They're our own friends, they couldn't be closer. They're our own people (elementary family) almost - and I feel it," she said.

One woman whose sisters emigrated to America and who did not send her any clothes or money from the States said that if either of these sisters came back on a visit, "I wouldn't step out of the house

to meet them - I'd be ashamed of them," for behaving so badly towards her, and would not want to own them.

Not only are the ties of affection between kin on the island, and the sense of duty one has towards one's kin, in fulfilling obligations to them, very strong, but kinship ties link the islanders with their absent kin overseas. The very real bond that exists between such kin and their island kin, and the unity of the island family is shown by the way in which emigrants keep in constant touch with their relatives on the island by sending gifts and money, and coming back to visit them, even after an absence of as long as thirty years away, and by the frequent, often yearly return on holiday, of emigrants resident in the British Isles.

CHAPTER 9.

THE INHERITANCE OF LAND, AND ITS ACQUISITION BY LANDLESS MEN.

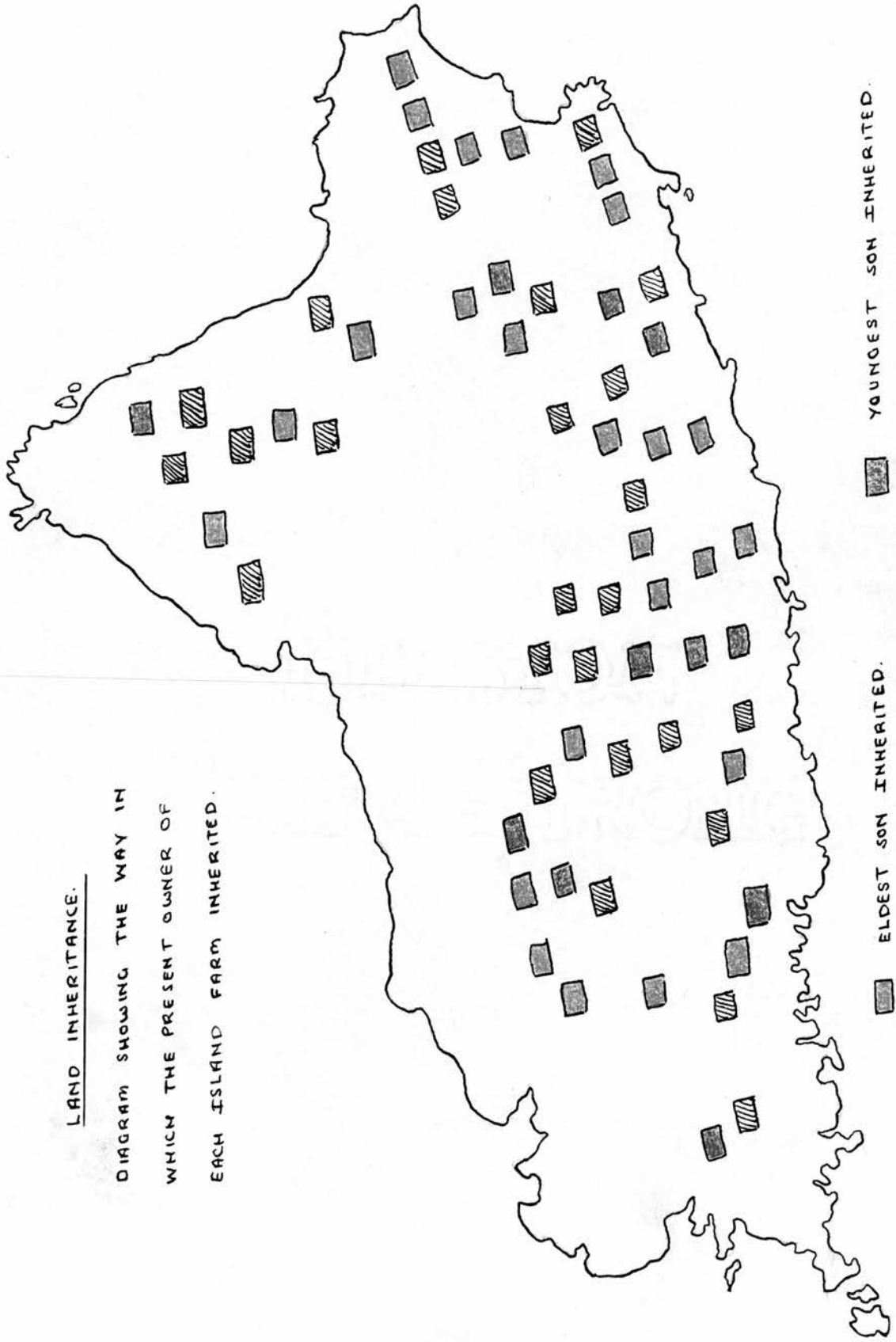
Inheritance of land is patrilineal, but one of the characteristics of the Western Islands, and of Clare Island in particular, is the vague and indefinite attitude towards the inheritance of land. Browne reports that on the Aran Islands, in Inishbofin and Inishshark it was the eldest son who inherited, whereas on Inishkea, Garumna and Lettermullen it was the youngest son.

One islander, asked about the inheritance of land on the island, said, "There is no rule, probably whoever the father or mother likes best. In the past it was generally the weakest. The more robust went abroad." Inheriting the land is often not so much a question of taking over a much coveted heritage as of taking over a tiresome responsibility. Many people who have been brought back from England or America to look after their old parents, and to inherit the family farm, still bitterly resent having to do so.

The son who inherits the land is referred to as "The one who stayed at home," If there are several sons and one inherits the land, the other sons, unless they can find a girl living on her parents' farm, whom they can marry, taking up residence with her on her parents' land, will most probably emigrate. "The children who emigrate are given nothing, but are expected to send money home, not alone to the parents but also to the brother who remains." If they

LAND INHERITANCE.

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE WAY IN
WHICH THE PRESENT OWNER OF
EACH ISLAND FARM INHERITED.



■ ELDEST SON INHERITED.

■ INTERMEDIATE SON INHERITED.

■ YOUNGEST SON INHERITED.

■ OTHER MEANS OF INHERITANCE (ONLY SON,
DAUGHTER, WIDOW ETC.)

remain on the island and "marry in" to another farm they are expected to take with them to the girl's parents £100, or the equivalent in stock, and in such a case the parents will try to provide their son with this money.

It is rare for a man to marry into a farm where the owner has a son still living, even if the son is overseas and does not want to return to the island to inherit the farm. The father will make every attempt to persuade his own son to come home and take up the inheritance before he consents to his daughter bringing a husband to live on the farm.

The mode of inheritance in 95 cases was investigated—the way in which the present owners of the 61 farms inherited, and the way in which the previous owners of 34 of these farms inherited, and the following results were obtained.

Eldest son inheritance	15
Youngest son inheritance	17
Intermediate son inheritance	26
Only son inheritance	16
No sons. Daughter inherits	3
Widow inheritance	1
Farm acquired by purchase	3
Inherited by "in-marriage"	14

These figures show that, although there is no definite rule concerning the inheritance of land, there is a tendency for neither the eldest nor the youngest son to inherit, but for one of the intermediate sons. It is to be expected on the island that the eldest son would be less likely to inherit the land, because he has the initial responsibility for helping his father on the farm, and tends to shift this responsibility on to one of his younger brothers as soon as

he can, and emigrates, while the younger brother remains at home to support his parents and eventually to inherit the farm. The fact that neither the elder nor younger son is as likely to inherit as the intermediate son suggests this is due partly to the emigration of the elder sons, and partly to the fact that it tends to be the most delicate of the sons who remains at home on the farm, regardless of his position in the sibling group.

Most of the farms were registered with the Land Commission when they were purchased from the Congested Districts Board, and the names in which they were registered then have not been changed since. Formal wills are rarely made, though if for some reasons the son insists on the farm being transferred to him. for instance on his marriage, he and his father will make a formal agreement, and sign a document putting the land into the son's name. An example of the difficulties which are occasionally caused by this lack of a formal, written will, transferring the land from father to son, is shown by the following case. One farmer wanted to get a loan from the County Council to put a slate roof on his house, but the farm had been handed to him on his father's death without any formal agreement, and the farm was not in his name, but still in his father's. Before he could get the loan he had to write to all his siblings in England and America, asking them for permission to put the land in his name, since, legally, they had as much claim to it as he did.

Although there are several houses on the island where two brothers are living together, there are no cases of joint inheritance. One of the brothers is officially the owner and the other one has no right to the land, until his brother's death. Though the son who inherits is not obliged to allow other siblings to remain on the farm when he inherits it he generally does, especially in the case of brothers, as they provide him with additional labour. It occasionally happens that if he intends to marry he will ask his sister to leave, especially if she is likely to resent his wife and to cause trouble in the home. When two brothers are living in the same house the financial arrangements existing between them depend on the working capacity of the brother who did not inherit the land.

M. was recalled home from England to look after his mother and to help his bachelor brother Antony to run the farm, since Antony was ill at the time and incapable of work. M. refused to come home unless it was agreed that the land should be his and an agreement was signed by which he took over ownership of the land, with the provision that Antony should always have a home there. Antony is now capable of work, and though he has no right to the land, he owns half the flock of sheep, which provides him with an income. The brothers work the farm together and M's wife runs the house for them both.

The arrangement between P. and J. is different, because J. has always been delicate and never able to do much work, so the farm and the stock have always belonged to P. and there is no such arrangement as that between M and his brother.

The agreement by which one brother owns the land but the other has a share in the stock applied when, as in Antony's case, the non-owner is fit and able to work the land, but not, as in J's case, when

he is unfit to work and is in a dependent position. "If he is too weak to work the land or is a semi-invalid he lives in the house with a brother who inherits the land and house, and helps on the farms and takes whatever the brother likes to give him. The parents, if they have any money, leave it to the weak one. The stronger brother gets married, the other doesn't." In such a case the non-inheritor depends for his upkeep and for the money for such things as cigarettes or tobacco on his brother, who is expected to provide for him as he does for himself.

The brother who inherits does not pay wages to the other for his labour, nor will he pay his sister if she keeps house for him. He will occasionally give his sister money for housekeeping but it is more usual for him to keep all the money and for the sister to ask for it when she needs it.

Brothers who work the farm together will share the responsibility of the farm however, and will, for instance, take it in turns to make trips to the mainland, one going out to the May Day fair while the other stays at home, and the other going out to watch the curragh racing in Galway.

Though the son will eventually inherit the farm it is very common for the father to be so reluctant to hand over the management of it to his son that, even when the son is a man of fifty, or the father incapable of doing any work himself, on the land, he will still refuse to relinquish his control of its management. In theory "The father hands over the land when he applies for the old age pension at the age of 70 - he won't get the pension if he has the land - but some would rather hold on to the land than take the pension." In fact many islandmen remain under their father's

domination until the father dies. Whether or not the father hands over the management of the land to his son, or son-in-law, he will still continue to work on the land as long as he is able to. Old men of over seventy still do a full day's work on the farm and their instructions are carried out implicitly by their middle aged sons, who must do the majority of the heavy work. An example of this reliance on one's father was that of a middle aged man who was recalled by the father from America, where he had been farming with all the most modern equipment, and who, on his return to the island, used to ask his father's advice about everything and looked upon him as the authority until he died.

There are four cases on the island today where this situation is not so much due to the father's desire to retain responsibility but to the sons' reluctance to shoulder it. Four sons, aged 26, 34, 35 and 49, though their old fathers are very willing to give up the land, do not want the responsibility and prefer their fathers to continue the administration.

It is rarely that the father is willing to give his son any responsibility in economic matters until he hands over the land to him. In general the amount of responsibility given by a father to his son, is very small, yet the son is not treated in the same way as a hired hand and given wages. "No regular wage is paid to the son. Occasionally the father gives him pocket money. It's more likely to be the mother who gives it, say at Christmas, St. Patrick's day, races or going to Louisburgh, but the amount is small. One reason given is so that the boy would not have the price of cigarettes or drink. Bad habits these. By the time the boy is eighteen he will get the dole from October to March, and in summer he can earn for

himself fishing. He is expected to "turn up" all he earns at home and the parents will maybe give him some pocket money out of it. In most cases the boy takes no chances and keeps it all himself. He is then talked of as a bad son." A boy, unless he earns money fishing during the summer, does not receive enough money to save for marriage, or any large expenditure. One boy of 24 who "put a girl up the hill" and had to marry her, had no money to buy a wedding ring, and since his father was hostile to the marriage and refused to give his son the money for the ring, the son had to borrow it from a wealthier neighbour.

A father's unwillingness to hand over the responsibility for running the farm, even when his son is married, when he is expected to do so, or even when he becomes incapable of any active work himself, and the conflict that arises from such a situation is shown by the following recent incident on the island.

Pat farmed his holding at the west without any help, living alone with his second wife, Maggie, until illness made him incapable of any active work, when he wrote to his son by his first wife, working in England, and asked him to give up his good job and come home with his wife to help him run the farm. Austin, the son, should have insisted that he would only return if his father agreed to sign the land over into his name first, but he returned at once without insisting on any such agreement. "He must have been cracked to come back to the farm when the place wasn't in his name, everyone says he was cracked to do it."

Though Pat was virtually bedridden he had no intention of giving up his control of the land. He was determined to remain in supreme control. In doing so neither he nor his wife thought that he was

being anything but generous to his son. His wife said to me, "Do you know the first year that man (her step son Austin) was here he got £45 for wool and we sold two cows and gave him half that, £50, and the next year he got £30 or £40 for wool and £60 for cattle - what more could we do for him?"

Pat often refused to let his son sell sheep and Austin was not able to do any work without his permission. The islanders say, "How could he keep a wife and family like that?" and maintain that when the young couple are supporting the old couple they should have complete control of the financial and administrative arrangements.

There were constant quarrels between the two women. From the first the older woman had been hostile to Austin's wife Nora, refusing to look after Nora's child occasionally in the evening so that she could go visiting. During the two years Nora was on the island she was only able to attend three station dances, and to make two visits to her husband's father's sister. The situation between the two women became so intolerable, chiefly because of the subordinate position in which Austin and his wife were placed, because of their lack of control of the management of the house and farm, that they eventually could stand the domination of the older couple no longer and returned to England. Once Austin had left Pat was once more in the position of being unable to run the farm on his own and realised that he should have signed the farm over to Austin on his arrival. He wrote to him offering to do so, if he would return, and said that Austin could build a separate room and kitchen on to the house so that there need be less friction between the two women, but Austin refused to come back, and so Pat had to leave his farm and move with his wife into her brother's

house.

Another couple solved this problem of the transfer of land from father to son by forcible means. Brian, living with his old widowed father wanted to marry K. but his father did not like K and refused to have her to live on the farm, or to sign the land over to Brian. Matters were brought to a head when K's brother and his wife came home from California to inherit the land - K. was asked to leave the house, and had no choice except to marry or emigrate. K. is an exceptional islandwoman, with considerable audacity and determination. Knowing that Brian's father was too old to manage the farm without his son's help, she persuaded Brian to elope with her to Achill, where she had matrilineal kin with whom they stayed. On their arrival in Achill they married and after a few days Brian's father came down by boat to beg him to return to the farm. Encouraged by K. Brian refused to do so unless his father signed the land over to him, and at the same time he agreed to apologize to K's mother for unpleasant remarks he had made about K. The old man was in such a difficult position since he could not farm the land unaided that he was compelled to agree to these terms - as K says, "He couldn't do anything else but sign the place over - the son left him and he had to follow him and sign the place in his name." Brian then returned with his father but K stayed in Achill for another week, "resting" and Brian's father had to pay for a boat to fetch her at the end of the week. The old man has resigned all control of the farm, and is now entirely dominated by his son and daughter-in-law K, who is installed as mistress of the house in which her husband's father at first refused to have her at any price.

Reluctant though the father may be to hand over the management of the land to his son on his marriage, he is still more reluctant to hand it over to his son-in-law. Though, if he has no son to inherit the land, he will try to marry his daughter to a man who will come and live in the house - the man in such a case is said to "marry in", - and though he is supposed to hand over control when the son-in-law comes into the house, he seldom does. One man accounts for this - "The son-in-law is anxious to have the farm in the father-in-law's name because he can get the dole all the year round if he can say he has no land." In general, though the father-in-law will have to give up control of the farm to his son-in-law sooner than he would have to do his own son, there is no automatic ruling about this. If a man does not consider his own son fit to take over the management of the farm he is even less likely to consider his son-in-law dependable enough. The attitude of a father-in-law whose daughter "married in the house" is typified by a man who said of his daughter's husband, a man of forty, to whom he has still not handed over the management of the farm, "He'd be all right if he'd do what we tell him", and people say of the young couple, "Willy could turn them out if he wanted to - it's his house." The son-in-law does not inherit the land for himself, but for the children he and his wife may have. If they have no children then the land will revert to the wife's family on the death of the couple.

Because of the difficulties of "marrying in", and the fact that the son-in-law tends to be in a more subordinate position "vis-a-vis" his father-in-law than he would be with his own father, people do not favour marrying in, and tend to look down on men who contract such marriages. T. married in to the worst holding on the island, one

HARVESTING OATS IN THE VILLAGE OF KILLE.



Father and son working side by side cutting oats on a western farm. They use a very primitive type of reaping hook, short handled, with a serrated edge. This necessitates a sawing rather than a slicing action when reaping, and also results in the reaper having to bend low in order to cut the grain, instead of standing more or less upright as he would when using a long handled scythe.

of the smallest, with very poor soil. A fellow islander says of this "Wouldn't you think that would be a deterrent to T. from the start - if he was a different class of a man he would never have considered it - you wouldn't mind marrying into a place with good land that you could make something of," but to marry on to the worst holding on the island, especially when both the wife's parents were living, and there was bound to be conflict in the house, is regarded as stupid. Another woman says that the proper thing for T. to do is to leave and go to England since the two families can't get on, "The little bit of land there isn't worth holding on to anyway - if he was right he'd go."

The Clare Island system of land tenure, which is typical of Western Ireland as a whole, reflects the importance of kinship in the elementary family, especially in the relationship between father and son, which results in the son, because of the respect he feels for his father, being willing to accept a subordinate position on the farm long after he should have taken over the responsibility for its management. This father-son relationship, and the fact that the son is willing to remain under his father's control, perhaps until his father dies, certainly until he himself is well into middle age, is, to a large extent, the reason for the lack of marriage on the island.

Under these conditions the son is neither financially nor psychologically independent of his father and, until his father is willing to hand over the farm to him, is often in no position to marry. By the time the father dies, or decides to hand over the farm, the son is often past the age when he feels inclined to marry.

This applies especially on Clare Island, where the men do not tend on the whole to follow the characteristic Western Ireland pattern of marrying at about 40-50, or even later, a girl considerably younger than themselves, but prefer, if they marry at all, to marry when they are about thirty a girl of approximately the same age.

In Chapter 7 I have described the attachment that a man feels for the land on which he was born, and his consequent reluctance to sell this land, even when there is very little likelihood of it being occupied again. As a result, it is very hard for a man without land to acquire it, and there have been very few cases on the island of outright sales of land. One man, just returned from America, purchased a farm, forty years ago, from an old man who was dying, and who was being cared for by his cousins. Fifty years ago a shopkeeper acquired a farm from an old man who was heavily in debt to him, as part payment of his debts. There have been no recent cases of the sale of land.

Though it is difficult to acquire land by purchase, it is occasionally possible to rent it. People will rent land that they have inherited from a kinsman, which they have no use for themselves, perhaps because they already have enough land for their own needs, perhaps because the holding they have inherited is a considerable distance from their own, and to use it would be inconvenient.

"People don't rent their holdings. It is regarded as the first step in the wrong direction," said one farmer, and the way in which the sale, or renting, of one's own land is regarded is shown in the case of Mark. Mark is a member of a very proud and conceited family, who is now too old to farm his land, and has left his holding to to and live with kin on the other side of the island. He has rented part of his land to his neighbour, and part to his brother's

son. Everyone says what a comedown it is for a family who thought they were such fine people, to be chopping up their own land into pieces and renting it. Such an action is regarded as very degrading.

People will not rent their own land, but will rent land that they have acquired to whoever will pay the most money for the tenancy, but as long as a "friend" is willing to pay, he will be given preference over an unrelated islander. There is a considerable amount of jealousy caused over the renting of good land, a relic of the land hunger of famine years. Mark's two neighbours, T. and J., for instance, are continually on bad terms with each other and everyone says that this is because T. is jealous because J. has rented Mark's land, and "It's the land he wants." "This old land hunger should have died out years ago, but it hasn't, of course, T. would be jealous of J. - he'd want the land."

The tenant can grow crops on rented land if he wants to, but in fact it is always grazed. Rent of land costs very little, about £5 per year for the grazing of a thirty acre farm, but the tenant is responsible for the maintenance of the fences.

Normally if the owner of a farm dies, even if he has no immediate family or close relatives, he will try to leave the land to a relative, or possibly to a relative of his wife, or if he has no kin to whom he wants to leave it, he might leave it to a good neighbour. B. a woman living on her own, is expected to leave her land, not to her closest kin, her two first cousins, who both have their own farms, but to her neighbour, who is very good to her, shearing her sheep, and providing her daily with milk, so that she does not need to keep a cow.

If a man without any close kin dies it is most usual for the neighbours to graze the land. "What generally happens is that his neighbours have been helping or attending to him and no one questions their right to use his house and land afterwards." In one case a man died without naming an heir to the land and his two kinsmen, both second cousins, fought over the land and eventually divided it in half to use for grazing, allowing the house to fall into ruins.

When a man died at the east, his neighbours on each side, whose land adjoined his, divided the land between them, each taking the piece of land adjacent to their own holding. The land is used for grazing and not for tillage, as is usually the custom when using rented or acquired land. The islanders say that they do not till such land because the owner might suddenly arrive back to take possession of his property and then they would have to relinquish the land and all the crops they had planted on it. Consequently, taking into account all the labour involved in tillage, the cultivation of a neighbour's deserted land is considered too great a risk. Even in the above case one of the neighbours says of the land, "The people died on it and there's no one left except maybe a brother in America." The house had been empty for 45 years and yet he still feels that kin of the original owner may return to claim the land again, "Of course if the man from America came back he would just move in and take over. No one could stop him," he says.

There is occasional ill feeling over such acquisition of land, as well as over the renting of land. One western farmer, C., had been a very good neighbour to M., whose land adjoined his. When M.

left the island it was agreed between them that C should take over his land for grazing. W had been renting some of M's land before this, for grazing, and was very resentful when C took over the land. He wrote a letter to the Employment Exchange in Castlebar, informing them that C was no longer eligible for the dole, as he had so much land, as a result of which C was deprived of the dole for several months.

A landless man, Thomas, living with his two brothers, was very anxious to acquire land of his own. He was extremely good to his old neighbour J, who lived on the next farm, and was incapable of doing much work. Thomas spent many years helping him, working for nothing, and when the old man died, since he had no close kin, Thomas expected to get the land and house in return for all his work, but the old man was in debt to a shopkeeper who took over the house and land as part payment of the debt. When Thomas heard this he was so enraged that he took his spade and smashed in all the windows and doors of the house, and he and his family did not speak to the shopkeeper's family for twenty years.

CHAPTER 10

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

One of the most significant indications of the way in which the island is "dying", is the dearth of marriages in the last few years, and the extreme unlikelihood of any marriages taking place in the future. Only twenty seven of the sixty one island houses contain married couples, the rest incomplete families of widows, widowers, or celibates. The table opposite illustrates the situation. Because of the lack of marriages in recent years (there have been no marriages for five years now) there is a corresponding lack of young families on the island. It is consequently very likely that thirty eight of the island houses will become unoccupied on the death of the present occupants, unless marriages take place in these houses.

Islanders have great difficulty in recalling when marriages last occurred on the island. One couple could only remember three recent marriages, nineteen, eighteen and ten years ago, and another couple's first reaction that that the only marriage they could remember seeing was their own, eighteen years ago, but managed to recall later that in the last ten years three marriages had taken place. Asked if there are likely to be any more marriages on the island the reaction is always the same - "If you want to see a wedding here you'll have to get married yourself - no one else will!" "If you stayed on this island till you'd be drawing the pension (at seventy) you wouldn't see a marriage here." "It's a dying island, and people don't marry on a dying island." Of the couples

who are courting at the moment the islanders say that they will not marry on the island but will emigrate together and marry overseas.

The islanders recall that about thirty years ago there used to be a marriage every year, and they remember how the priest used to chase courting couples with a blackthorn stick and beat them with it if he caught them. Even the Missioners, the Redemptorist fathers, who preach against the dangers of "keeping company" have begun to encourage contact between the sexes on the island in their sermons, and to emphasise the desirability of the married state. The general attitude on the island is one of concern and regret at the dearth of marriages.

Jonathan Pim¹ writes after the Famine "The recklessness with which the poor Irish, especially in the west, contracted marriage, has frequently been remarked. That they did not do so without some prospect of being able to obtain the means of subsistence for themselves and their families, is shown by the fact that, since the recent calamity (the Famine) marriages are extremely rare in the more distressed parts of the country." It may be that the Famine had some effect in inhibiting the desire to marry among the islanders in the years of privation which resulted from it, and that this feeling of economic insecurity might have influenced the islanders against marriage, but it seems that the reasons behind the dearth of marriage have a social rather than an economic basis.

Emigration, which has had such a marked effect on island life, has especially affected the marriage rate. Because most people who emigrate tend to do so before reaching the age of twenty there is a considerable disparity in the number of people in the 10-19 age

1. Jonathan Pim. The Conditions and Prospects of Ireland, Dublin 1848.

group, the pre-marriage group, in which there are 45 people, in the 40-49 group, in which there are 38 people, the 50-59 group with 35, and with the numbers in the age groups in which marriage is most likely to occur, the 20-29 group, which has 21 people, and the 30-39 group which has only 11. Not only are there very few people in the groups in which marriage is most likely to occur, only 32 in all, but there are more men than women, a ratio of 19:13, and of these women only 4 are free to marry, the remaining seven being prevented by kinship obligations, kept at home to look after old parents or bachelor brothers. Only two of these women are already married.

Men say it is hard to get a wife on the island because the women prefer to emigrate. "Still I believe if a man really wants to get married he can overcome that," said one of the many bachelors. Another bachelor of sixty said, "If you have the piece of land in Inishturk you can always get a wife - it's the very opposite here - no matter what you've got you can't get a wife."

Two married men were discussing the lack of marriage - A said it is because the girls emigrate to England to see what it is like and then don't come back. T says this is not the reason there are no marriages. It is because the men have not enough courage to propose to them. A said if they did the women would refuse, to which T replied that if he was young and was refused by a girl he would waylay her on the road and assault her, because, "If a man has good intentions towards a girl he should have her."

The desire to emigrate is often given as a reason for the lack of marriages - "Of course a lot of the people here feel that England or America is before them and they are not ready to marry until they have been there."

The decline of the old marriage customs has had a great deal to do with the alarming fall in the marriage rate too. Many islanders say that it is a pity that match-marriages have died out because they were usually very satisfactory, since the parents, who arranged the marriages, usually knew what was good for their children.

The essential nature of the match marriage was that it was an arrangement. Romantic love, or even affection, between the couple concerned, rarely entered into it. It was a business-like arrangement between the two fathers concerned and it was frequently the case that the man and woman had never even spoken to each other before the marriage was arranged.

There were no professional matchmakers on the island. The preliminary arrangements were usually made by the two fathers, after which the boy would go to the girl's house to ask for her hand. If a boy's father was dead an older friend or kinsman would suggest a suitable wife for him and undertake the preliminary negotiations, but there was no question of a man paying for such services.

The prospective groom would then take a bottle of whisky to the girl's house and drink it with the girl's father. During the drinking, which often lasted far into the night, the boy would ask for the girl's hand.

An islandman gave the following description of how a match-marriage used to be contracted. "If a man wanted to marry a certain girl and he thought that she was receptive then he would go himself to her house and ask the father for her hand, and also ask what fortune (dowry) the father was going to give if he was accepted. If he was not sure of his ground and was shy he would ask

some friend, someone older or well thought of by the girl's father, to do the asking. This procedure varies; sometimes there may be one, two or three people taken by the potential groom but that would be more likely to be when he had got a promise of the girl's hand, and the function of these people would be to make a bargain about the amount of dowry. A dowry was necessary. A girl could get married without one, but strangely enough only to a man who had so little himself that he had no right to ask for a dowry. If a man was well-off, then the girl he'd marry was expected to have a big dowry and often families penalised themselves trying to scrape money to better the daughter's social standing."

The usual amount of the dowry was a hundred pounds. If the girl's father did not have the full amount in cash, cattle or sheep would be used to make up the deficiency. The usual procedure was to pay half the figure agreed on the morning of the wedding, the girl's father counting out the money to the groom in the bride's house after the marriage had taken place, and handing over the other half at the christening of the first child.

There were occasional disagreements about payment. When M married A her father paid over half of the money at the marriage but the rest, to be paid in sheep, had not been handed over several years after the birth of their first child. A's father was determined to get this money and used to send M home every few months, telling her not to return unless she brought the sheep with her. She would stay in her own house for one or two weeks, afraid to come back to her husband without the sheep. After M had been driven home several times by her exasperated father-in-law, her father

eventually handed over the sheep.

The absence of romance in match marriages and their business-like nature is illustrated by the following incidents.

P, an extremely ugly man in his fifties, decided he would like a wife, so he went to G, who had four daughters, taking with him the necessary bottle of whisky, and asked for one of the daughters in marriage. "Which one?" enquired the father, "Oh, any one will do." P replied. Half the bottle of whisky was drunk when he found that G had no intention of giving him any of his daughters, so he corked the bottle and went straight to T that same night, and asked T for his daughter W. T agreed and drank the other half of the bottle of whisky while W ran round to the neighbour's houses saying, "P has asked me in marriage and me Da has given me." P was afraid that if it became known that he had been refused in one house he would find it hard to get a wife, and consequently he wasted no time in asking at the second house. Browne¹ reports that in Aran in 1893 "A man goes to a house where there is a suitable girl and asks her to marry him. If she refuses he might go straight on to another: and a man has been known to ask a third girl in the same evening before he was accepted."

N was an attractive girl who kept house for her two bachelor brothers, who decided that they wanted to marry and that N must be married so that she was not in their way. They arranged a marriage for her with a man twenty years older than herself. He had land and the brothers offered cattle as a dowry. The girl was so unwilling to marry the man that, at the wedding, her wrists had to be held by onlookers to enable the groom to force the ring on to her fingers as she shrank back from him. In spite of this unpromising start the

1. Charles Browne. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Vol. V, 1898.

marriage turned out to be a very happy one.

J. was the son of a northern farmer, wealthy by island standards, having a forty acre farm and £300 in cash. J. was an ugly man of over forty when his father arranged a match for him with P's daughter, living on a twenty acre farm at the east. The two fathers had completed the preliminary negotiations, and P and his wife were pleased at the prospect of acquiring such a wealthy son-in-law. It was agreed that J. should call at the house on a certain night to make a formal request for the girl's hand. On the night before J. was to call a group of men were discussing the matter in the pub, saying how terrible it was for anyone to have to marry someone as old and ugly as J. One of the young western farmers heard this, and feeling sorry for the girl, whom he had only seen once or twice, and needing a wife himself, brought a bottle of whisky and rushed to P's house and asked for his daughter's hand. P., sure that his daughter would choose to marry J., the wealthier man, said, "I'll leave it to the girl herself." To his surprise the girl accepted the young westerner at once, in spite of his poverty. This marriage took place about 35 years ago, and has been extremely happy. J. has remained unmarried.

The idea of match marriage has still not entirely died out on the island. The last marriage so arranged took place about thirty years ago. Recent marriages have been based on mutual affection rather than arranged, but D. was recently approached by an islander who wanted D. to arrange a match for his daughter with M. a wealthy middle aged bachelor, and a close friend of D's. D. refused to do so. M. is regarded by the islanders as a very marriageable man because he owns one of the large farms and is considered very wealthy. Two years ago an islander tried to arrange a match for him with a girl in

Louisburgh (a kinswoman of the matchmaker) making preliminary negotiations with her parents, who were delighted at the idea of their daughter marrying such a wealthy man, and accepted the proposition with pleasure, without however consulting their daughter, or even mentioning it to her. The proposed marriage came to nothing however because of the reluctance of the big farmer to marry, and his refusal to continue negotiations.

A less formal method of acquiring a wife was by the practice of "wife-stealing." The islanders cannot recall more than about six instances of this form of "marriage by capture," because the last known case occurred in about 1880, and they cannot remember any more recent occurrence of it.

The principle of wife stealing was that if a man could get a girl to spend the night with him in his house then she would have to marry him, because no one else would marry her afterwards. It was a method resorted to by men who would not be accepted by the women they wanted to marry. When a weaver came to the island to settle he was anxious to get a wife, but because he was a stranger and people were suspicious of him, he found it difficult. He was living alone in his cottage and one evening a girl came to him, bringing wool to be woven into a suit for her father. He asked her into the house, locked the doors and refused to release her until the next morning, and the next day they were married. Another man managed to lure a girl into his house but her relatives gathered outside and threatened him, and so he released her and she did not have to marry him.

A. was an extremely strong girl who was used to carrying two hundredweight sacks of potatoes and oats on her back from the harbour and worked alongside her father in the fields like a man. J. wanted

to marry her but she was unwilling, so one day he came up behind her when she was not expecting it, picked her up, and tried to carry her into his house, but as he was going through the door she reached up and caught hold of the door jambs and, because she was so strong, he could not loosen her grip and force her inside. Her father heard her shouting and hurried up to free her.

Though wife stealing has died out completely on the island now, it is an interesting form of marriage by capture and indicates that at the end of the nineteenth century the Clare Islanders, since they sometimes had to resort to such a drastic method of getting a wife, were more marriage prone than they are today.

It is a strange fact that, since match marriages have died out, though marriage is to a much greater extent a matter of individual preference today, there has been a considerable amount of parental interference in the last few marriages that took place on the island, a vestige of the time when parents arranged their children's marriages. Now their interference takes a negative rather than a positive form in that, since they cannot arrange a marriage they approve of, they will tend to do their best to prevent one that they disapprove of.

The reason most parents give for trying to prevent their children from marrying is that the person their son or daughter chooses is not their social equal. There are many celibates on the island today who have allowed such parental disapproval to prevent them from marrying, and who, now that their parents are dead, are too old to marry. The islanders feel that such parental interference is wrong. "It's the likes of them (interfering parents) that's ruined this island." One spinster of eighty was in love with a bachelor, now eighty four, and they intended to marry, "But the

parents put a stop to it, and it wasn't right. Parents often did that in the old days - sometimes they know what was right but more times they are wrong," a fourteen year old girl told me.

Two typical instances of the way in which parental interference has ruined a man's chances of marriage are shown by A. and J. A. is a bachelor of 55 living with his old father and spinster sister, a characteristic island household. When he was young and showed an inclination to marry his father ridiculed any one he started to court on the grounds that they were not good enough for his son. Now that A. is too old for marriage his father grumbles and blames him for not marrying when he had the chance.

J., a bachelor of 68, lived with his widowed mother and used to work for one of the big farmers. While working there he fell in love with B. a girl from Inishturk, who looked after the children of the family, and wanted to marry her. B. was a pleasant and attractive girl but J's mother did not consider that she was her son's social equal. One Sunday J's mother was met by a neighbour on her way to mass and in the course of conversation the neighbour congratulated her on the excellent girl her son had chosen for a wife. J's mother denied that her son had any intention of marrying B. and said, "When my son marries he will look for a wife among his equals. Let B. look for someone among her equals." As a result of his mother's disapproval J. did not marry B. who went to America and married there. J. is now living alone, his house almost in ruins.

In spite of the fact that people appear to resent parental interference there is a feeling that one should not attempt to defy one's parents if they disapprove of one's choice of a partner. K. who (as mentioned in the previous chapter) defied her father in law, and forced him to agree to her terms, is regarded with awe but not

with admiration by the rest of the islanders. "No one else but K. would have done that," other women say disapprovingly.

The extent to which children depend on their parents in the choice of marriage partners is shown by the remark of an old bachelor. He was looking for a book and his spinster sister who kept house for him said, "It's up in the room where your dear father left it - he left everything ready for you to lay your hands on." "Yes," replied her brother bitterly, "he left everything ready for me to lay my hands on except the one thing I wanted to lay my hands on - a wife."

Parental interference is caused primarily by the fear of conflict between the old and the young couple. When the son marries, because of the small size of the three roomed cottage, his wife is forced into a very close relationship with her parents in law, especially with her husband's mother, with whom she must work in the kitchen all day, cooking meals and baking bread over the single turf fire, and often facing constant criticism from the older woman. Though conflict and jealousy between the two women is not inevitable and in many cases there has been no such conflict, nevertheless people are always aware of the possibility of it, and many men prefer to wait until their parents, and especially their mother, dies, before bringing a wife into the house, for this reason. Women especially say that no girl would be willing to marry into a house where there were old parents, and add that this is one of the reasons for the lack of marriage. It would be different if a separate house was built on the farm for the son and his wife - "That's what's been wrong with this island for the last fifty years - that's been the cause of it - these old ones (parents) in the house have a lot to answer for." "Two women in the one house never agree," "When a

couple marry they should have no one in the house but themselves, that's the proper way." "A young couple and an old couple in the house never see eye to eye - you need to be very tolerant," are opinions frequently expressed.

Speaking of the conflict mentioned in the previous chapter between an old couple, Pat and his wife, and his son, Austin and Austin's wife, which resulted in the return of Austin and his wife to England, one neighbour said that both the women had very hot tempers, "And you know what happens when two hot irons meet - they both render," and adds, "To tell the truth I think that if Austin had married St. Teresa and brought her into the house Pat (the old father) would have found fault with her." Speaking of the older woman's treatment of the younger she said, "Everyone thinks badly of her for that and she knows it."

This conflict between the old and young couples is accentuated by the frequent lack of financial independence of the young couple, because of the reluctance of the old couple to hand over the management of the farm to their son. "How it is here the old parents don't want to let go the reins, they don't want to give up control. Of course they may die, but even so they will have spoilt what should be the happiest years of the young couple's marriage," says a middle aged bachelor, explaining that, because of this lack of financial independence, the young couple tend to quarrel and become bitter. The reluctance of the old couple to hand over the management of the farm to their son may be due in part to a subconscious fear that, when their son is in control they may receive treatment similar to that Browne¹ reported from the Aran Islands in the 1890s - "Occasionally

1. C. Browne - op. cit.

the old people are badly treated, and when an old man has made over his farm to his married son the young people have been known to half starve him, and give him the small potatoes reserved for pigs."

Lack of financial independence may be the cause of difficulties after marriage but in many cases it also discourages young men from marrying. One boy of twenty two says he cannot think of getting married, or even of being serious about a girl, "When it's all I can do to find the price of a half-pint or a packet of cigarettes." He says he is in no position to marry and yet earns a hundred pounds a year lobster fishing so those who do not have a supplementary source of income must find the prospect of marriage even more impossible.

Emigration, parental interference, and the system of land tenure which causes young men to be financially dependent on their parents, are three factors which tend to discourage marriage on the island, but as important a deterrent to marriage as any of these is the force of kinship obligations which prevent many girls from marrying. Several of the island women, now married, have had to fulfil kinship obligations first. One woman, who married at thirty, spent the early years of her life looking after her crippled mother, father and seven brothers. She then spent a few years in England on the death of her mother, looking after her widowed brother's two sons, returning to the island again to look after her old father, and not marrying until his death. Many of the girls of marriageable age (i.e. child-bearing age) are in similar situations today. One attractive girl of thirty four has spent the last ten years of her life looking after two bachelor brothers, one of them a cripple, and her widowed mother, and says she cannot think of leaving them to marry or emigrate until they no longer need her. It is usually the youngest

daughter who has the unenviable task of remaining on the island to look after the old parents or bachelor brother. For the elder daughters kinship obligations may not prevent marriage so much as postpone it for a few years. One girl who intended to emigrate to England and marry an islandman, was prevented from doing so when her mother died, leaving her to look after seven younger siblings and an old father. She remained at home until her youngest sister was old enough to look after the old father and the one brother who remained at home, postponing her marriage for sixteen years. Now the youngest daughter must wait for the death of her father, or for her brother to marry, before she can marry or emigrate.

Though a girl is often prevented from marrying because of the obligation she feels to look after parents or bachelor brothers, it also sometimes happens that a sister is the cause of her brother remaining celibate. Often she will look after her brother until they are both middle aged, when he will decide to get married, and since he has no further need for her as a housekeeper, will ask her to leave. Alternatively she will resent the possibility of her brother marrying and bringing his wife into the house to displace her as its mistress and will do her best to discourage him from doing so.

No girl relishes the prospect of marrying into a house where the husband's sister is living, and this may lead to the brother remaining celibate. "No one wants to go into a house where there's an old maid - it's not so bad if it's a brother." One woman accounted for the celibacy of J., living with his spinster sister Ann, "When you get past a certain age you don't bother - besides there's Ann, she'd never have let him marry."

A 75 year old bachelor blames his eighty year old sister for his

failure to marry, saying that no girl would have wanted to come into the house with her there, and blames himself for not taking his father's death-bed advice, to give her eight days to find a husband, and then send her packing whether she had found one or not. It was not uncommon for a brother to do this and a sister who has devoted many years to looking after her brother may find that when he decides to marry she will be asked to leave the house, by which time she will often be too old to get married herself. One woman gave as a reason for her marriage after a ten year courtship, "Of course I'd known him all the time, but my brother had just got married and there was no room for me in the house."

When J, a man in his forties, living with his forty year old sister, decided to marry he told his sister that there was no room for her in the house and that she must leave. A fifty year old neighbour whose mother had just died and who was looking for a wife, hearing of the situation, started to court her. They used to meet by the roadside, behind a barn, and the village boys hiding in the barn listened to their stilted conversation heard such remarks as "I made a churning today," followed by a long pause, and his reply "And was there much butter on it?" coupled with a complete lack of love-making or any attempts at romantic conversation. It was purely a marriage of convenience, since she was faced with the choice of marrying him or being expelled from her own home, and he needed a wife. Yet when he died forty years later she was heartbroken and would not stir from his body to eat or sleep until his burial.

A similar situation was that involving A., who lived with his sister K. A. had been courting M. for twenty years, but M. would not marry him while K. was living in the house and K. refused to leave. In the end M. decided that she would marry A. in spite of this,

and she was thirty eight when she married. K. did not want A. to marry and did her best to prevent it. A cousin of theirs says of K. "She has spoilt her brother's life. She could have got out of the house long ago and he should have told her to go. She has no business there." A neighbour says of the conflict between M. and K., which is as strong as ever after six years of marriage, "They didn't get on at all at first - they had awful quarrels, but now K. helps her brother on the land and M. works in the house and they never speak at all - that's how they manage. Of course K. ought not to be there at all. She has a brother in Westport and his wife died and his children are all in America and he has no one to keep house for him. You'd think K. would be glad to go to Westport but she hates it and says she'd be lonely there. It's the likes of her that's wasted Ireland." (by preventing marriage.)

Probably one of the reasons why the islanders do not marry is because of the attitude of men towards sex. They tend to place sex and marriage in two different categories, and do not regard the need for sexual satisfaction necessarily as a basis for marriage. The attitude towards this is shown by the remark made by one man to another, who had suggested that some girls should accompany them on a trip to the mainland. - "Women are all right for riding (coitus) but not for taking on journeys."

The lack of marriage on the island does not imply that there is a lack of interaction between the sexes. In fact there is a great interest in sex and a considerable amount of courting is still carried on. There are no taboos on sex as a topic of conversation in mixed company, where jokes about copulation and sex in general are enjoyed by all. Men and women, married and single, joke together about sexual

matters, showing a complete lack of embarrassment. The attitude towards sex is typified by the remark of the man letting his bull out to someone else's cows, turning to his friend and saying, "And who are you letting yourself out to at the moment?" The common expression for having sexual intercourse is "rejoicing oneself." One island man said to me that the two extremes of the island attitude towards sex are expressed in the following remarks, the request of a boy who took his sister home from a dance and said, "Would it be uncouth to ask for a kiss," and the boy who suggested to him at a dance, noticing two girls leaving, "Come on, let's follow them and "bull" them."

Though there are no taboos on sex as a topic of conversation there is a definite feeling of impropriety about open sexual behaviour, especially with girls, who are expected to dress and behave modestly, and not to flaunt themselves in front of men. People speak of a boy of twenty four who has never gone with a girl at all and put this down as a point in his favour.

Pre-marital sex experience is not uncommon and many of the older celibates have had pre-marital sexual experience and are not in the least ashamed to admit it. As one spinster of sixty said of intercourse she had with one man on the way home from a dance, "What can you do when a man has you down on the ground and is riding on top of you?" "Coitus interruptus" is practised, along with the "safe period" method of contraception, which in recent years has become known on the island and is used by married couples as a method of birth control.

There is a considerable amount of prestige attached to sexual

prowess and men who boast about the conquests they have made are regarded with admiration, whereas the woman-hater is regarded as a joke, who "Should have had something put in his porridge." One man says of his friend, who is regarded as being a great fellow with women, "Sure, he'd be no good at all if he wasn't that way," and an old bachelor who regrets that he never married continually boasts of his sexual experience, "You wouldn't believe how many women have been elbow deep in my fork, milking me like a cow."

Though there is no negative sanction on pre-marital intercourse pre-marital pregnancy is regarded as extremely shameful. Illegitimacy is very rare on the island, and it can almost be said to be non-existent, since in the last 100 years there has only been one case of it. This is probably because if a man "puts a girl up the hill" he is expected to marry her and normally does so. Even in such a case people will refer to the unborn child as a "bellyfull of shame". The man who "put a girl up the hill, "married her three months before she gave birth to twins and was so delighted that he went round boasting of how he had "put two into her at the first go" was atypical in his reaction and his behaviour was considered shameless.

Islanders say there is no question of anyone being willing to marry a girl who has had a "misfortune", (illegitimate child) because they would not have the courage to do so in the face of public opinion, unless they were responsible, in which case they would be expected to do so.

The opportunities the sexes have for meeting each other on the island are few. It is regarded as improper for boys and girls to meet and to go for walks together in the evening after work is finished.

As Browne¹ says of Garumna and Lettermullen, of such contact between the sexes, "Public opinion is very strict on the score of their relationship and a girl would not be allowed to walk a hundred yards up the road after sunset, even with a cousin." As one island girl said, "If you're seen talking to a man on the road, you're married to him." (i.e. it is considered as an indication that you will soon get married.)

Contact between the sexes is limited to visits a boy may make to a girl's house, ostensibly to visit her father or brother, to the weekly dances in the hall, and to the house and "station dances." Even when a couple are serious about each other and intend to marry they will not visit each other's houses before marriage. It would be considered very irregular and slightly shocking to do so, and people laugh at the idea of anyone doing so. One man told me of how embarrassed he was when he was emigrating to England, because a girl who had arranged for him to accompany her on the journey kept calling at the house to enquire whether he had arranged the passages. "She pestered me for weeks, calling in every day - I wouldn't have minded but my father was there at the time and he would think I was going with her" (i.e. "keeping company") The fact that such a misapprehension could occur shows the lack of confidence that sometimes exists between father and son in such matters.

The weekly dances at the church hall on Sunday evenings are attended mainly by the younger people, but the older men of about forty, who are thinking of marrying, also attend them and try to escort home the girl of their choice. Some of these older men have little intention of marrying but enjoy a casual flirtation. One man

1. C. Browne. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Vol. V. 1898.

of forty started dancing a lot with a nineteen year old girl. A man will be considered to be "keeping company" with a girl if "he brings her out a lot on the floor at the dance." He used to escort her home after the dance until people began to talk about this and discuss his intentions of marrying, when he realised that if he continued to do so everyone would expect him to marry her. "He didn't mind going with her as long as no-one knew about it, but when everyone started talking about it he just stopped."

The Church forbids girls to go to dances until they are sixteen and even then they are usually accompanied by another girl. Many parents refuse to let their daughters attend dances unless they are accompanied by a sister or a friend, and parents who allow their daughters to go alone are regarded as irresponsible.

At present there are eight couples on the island who are recognised as keeping company, in the sense of being seen at dances together, and going home together afterwards. The age ratio of women to men in these eight instances is 17:21, 18:22, 18:25, 17:24, 17:18, 19:42, 17:24, and 24:21 but the only case in which marriage is likely to take place, in island opinion, is the last case, where the girl is older than the boy, and where they have been keeping company for several years.

A characteristic case of an island courtship, and of the reluctance to marry for one reason or another is that of M. and K. E. a bachelor of 55, lives on the family farm which he inherited on his father's death, with his widowed mother. His younger brother M, also a bachelor, works in England and comes home every two years for several months holiday. M. has a girl on the island, K, who is twenty nine. M. is forty. They have been keeping company for ten years, and K. has no interest in any other men, even when M. is in England. He

has asked her to marry him and come to England, but she refuses to leave the island and wants him to marry her and to settle on the farm with his mother and brother, which he refuses to do. When M. comes home on holiday they go out for walks and go up to the bog to fetch turf together, something that no other couple would dare to do. During the summer they will help each other to stack their turf into clamps, and the rest of the islanders expected that they would announce their marriage last year, but without any warning M. suddenly returned to England, leaving K. on the island. M's mother is old and feeble and needs a younger woman to help her in the house. She said to me that she misses M. terribly, and that he should have stayed and married, "But the reason he gave me for going was that he was too old to get married - to tell you the truth I was so vexed with him I didn't care whether he went or stayed. - you know I have four sons and not one of them is married, and they're all nice boys - isn't it a fine thing when a man won't marry when his mother is all alone and needs a help in the house?"

The island attitude to marriage is that it is a desirable and normal state, and it is thought to be a great pity that people have become so unwilling to marry. "There are too many bachelors on this island," "This island is a circus with all the old bachelors," "All the bachelors on this island should be shot," "There's another one who hasn't got married - everyone who isn't married should be hanged," are just a few of the ways in which this feeling is expressed. On the other hand this attitude is accompanied by scorn for the Inishturk islanders who marry very young and much more frequently than on Clare, with the result that their population is increasing while that of Clare is decreasing. They are regarded with distaste because of their

tendency to marry close kin. "They don't care who they marry - they're like rabbits," "The married people go to dances there and a married man has a girl friend as much as a single man - of course the people of Inishturk are a very primitive, backward sort of people. They are quite different to the people here where sex is concerned." They are despised because they approve of remarriage on the death of the first spouse, and are regarded as very immoral.

The need for a woman to keep house, sexual satisfaction, and the desire to have children to inherit the land, are the chief reasons the islanders give for marrying.

The importance of children in marriage is shown by the pity that is expressed for a childless couple, especially for the woman, who is usually blamed. One woman who is barren said, "If I'd known that I couldn't have children I don't think I would ever have got married at all. I was looking forward to having lots of children."

A bachelor of forty, expressing disgust at a recent marriage in Inishturk where the groom has bad eyesight and the bride was an albino, said that people with such physical defects should not marry because, "Somehow I should imagine that's one of the pleasures of marriage - looking at your children, and if there's going to be something wrong with them you shouldn't marry."

The attitude of the average girl towards marriage is essentially practical. Whereas a few years ago girls used to emigrate to America for a few years, to earn some money, and then return to the island, ostensibly on holiday, in the hope of receiving a proposal of marriage from an islandman, this tendency is very much on the decline. Now if a girl emigrates she is most likely to do so permanently.

The island girl marries less for love than for material comfort

A FARM AT THE WEST.



"A girl looks at the house-it must be nice,"
and few island girls would marry the owner
of this western farm,because of the shabby
state of the house,its thatched roof,and
the poor land which goes with it.

and if she cannot find a man to provide it she will prefer to emigrate. If she marries an islandman he must have a good, well-maintained house. "A young girl looks at the house - it must be nice." Her husband must have some money saved up, and a good holding of land, and it will be an added disadvantage if his old parents are still living. One woman of fifty five is trying to persuade her neighbour, a man of twenty eight, to marry her. People say if she is determined enough she may succeed because he has a lot of disadvantages which would make him an unlikely choice with a young girl. He is poor, his holding is small, his house is old and in bad repair, with a thatched roof, and his old mother lives with him. As one woman said, "A young girl is always anxious to get a good house - sure K (the older woman) would marry him if he had no house at all."

Everyone says, on the other hand, that one of the big farmers at the north, a man of thirty nine, would make an excellent husband because he is wealthy. He made £150 in the spring from the sale of Calves, and another £200 to come from selling wool, besides all that he will earn lobster fishing, "I'm telling you any girl that marries M. wouldn't want for anything - and M. is a young man, he's not forty yet."

The attitude of celibates varies considerably. There are some born bachelors on the island who have never been known to have a girl friend and their attitude is one of indifference, but in general people fall into two categories, those who want to marry and openly regret that they have not done so, and those who try to conceal this. regret by avoiding and ridiculing members of the opposite sex. The regret at remaining celibate is shown by the remark made by one spinster, with a habit of talking to herself, overheard when she was

milking one evening, muttering, "Wouldn't you think one of them would have married me, even if it was only Charlie (a man thirty years older than her) - Look at M - she was as old as me when she married - and she had a lot of children." A bachelor in his seventies, who in his younger days used to maintain that an inferior man could be satisfied with an inferior woman, but that he wanted a better class of girl than the island had to offer, says now that he is so lonely he wishes he had "put a girl up the hill" so that he would have had to marry her.

People in the second category, those who try to conceal their loneliness make such remarks as, "I must have my independence," (40 year old bachelor.) "I never have any truck with women - I couldn't stand living in the house with a woman - a man's better off without them." (Bachelor, 55, living alone in a semi-ruined house) "I've steered clear of women - the trouble with women is they have tongues - I'd like to clip the tongue out of every woman on this island. They talk all day and when they've finished they've said nothing." (Bachelor of 65) One man even went so far as to say that what a man needs on Clare Island is "A bike, a wireless, a wife and a plough, in that order."

There is a general feeling that "There's a time for getting married and it's not when you're old." Women say that it is best to marry at about twenty eight to thirty, and that if you are not married by thirty eight you might as well stay single. The reason they give for marrying at this age rather than younger is so that they do not have too many children. The couple who married five years ago, the girl only eighteen and the man twenty one, were regarded as "ridiculous" to marry so young, and though a woman is regarded as too old to marry

Table illustrating the proportion of married^{*} and celibate in
different age groups

Seventeen to twenty nine years

<u>Celibates</u>		<u>Married</u>		<u>Percentage of celibates</u>
<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	
15	14	1	1	93.5%

Thirty to forty five years

<u>Celibates</u>		<u>Married</u>		<u>Percentage of celibates</u>
<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	
18	6	5	13	57.1%

Forty six to sixty years

<u>Celibates</u>		<u>Married</u>		<u>Percentage of celibates</u>
<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	
11	8	14	9	45.2%

Over sixty years

<u>Celibates</u>		<u>Married</u>		<u>Percentage of celibates</u>
<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	
8	3	22	17	32%

* including widows and widowers

once she has passed child-bearing age, the same age is regarded as young for a man to be thinking of marrying. As one woman said of a man of 55, "J is a young man - there's people of J's age thinking of marrying yet."

The island do not approve of a large difference in age between husband and wife. They consider a difference of two to four years is enough because, "Youth and age can't mix," and they continually stress what a horrible thing it is to see a young girl tied to an old man, though in the last thirty years there have been several incidences of islandmen of forty or more marrying girls twenty years younger than themselves. There was a very unfavourable reaction to the recent marriage on Inishturk of a man of fifty-five to a girl thirty years his junior, "It isn't right - it's a mortal sin - the priest shouldn't have married them", etc.

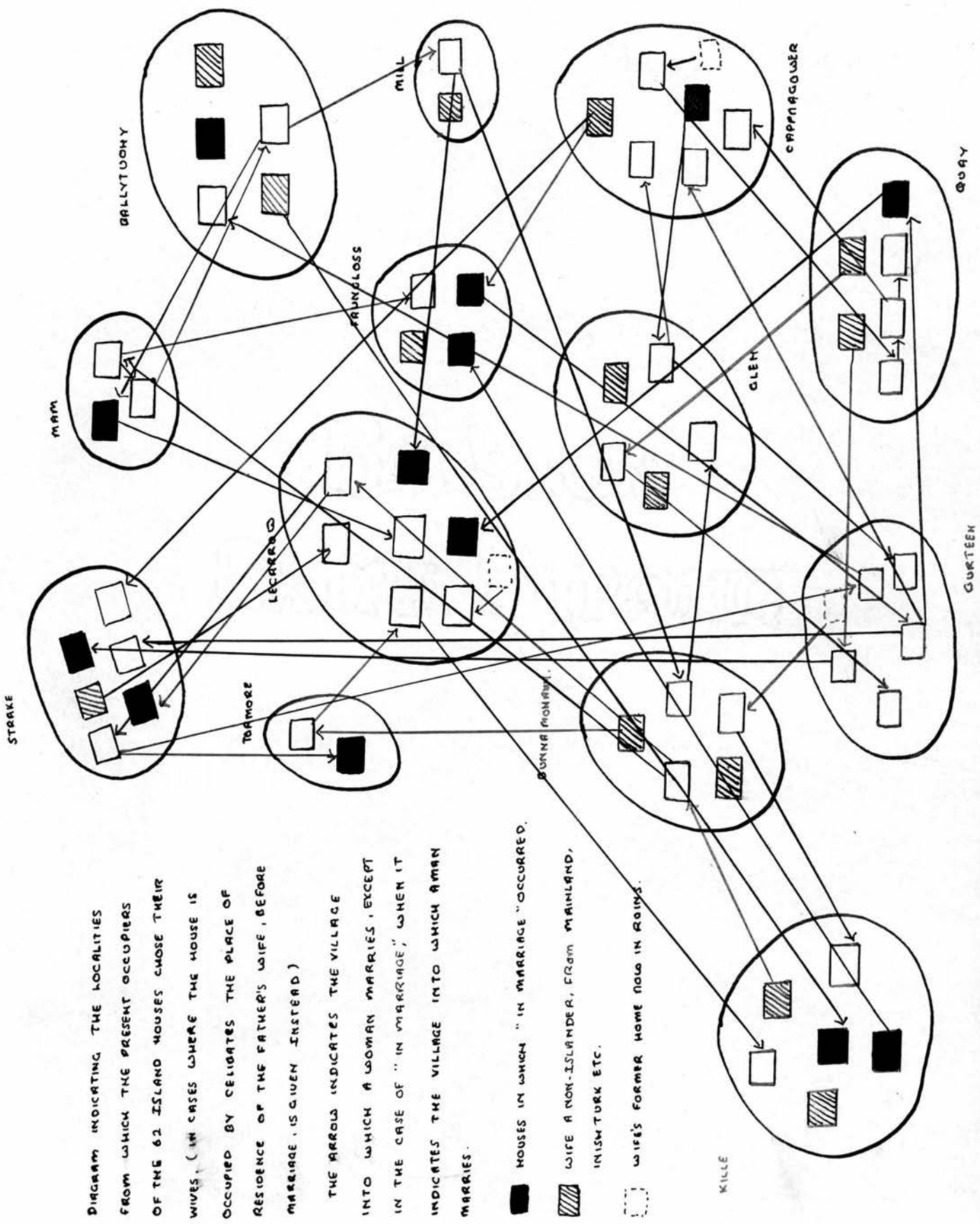
The table on the opposing page illustrates the proportion of married and celibate in the different age groups. It can be seen that the percentage of celibates decreases steadily with age, the majority of people over 46 being married or widowed, whereas the majority under 46 are celibates. Of people over 46 the ratio of married to celibate is 62:30, and of people under 46 the ratio is 20:53.

In the two lower age groups there are more married women than married men, fourteen married women as opposed to six married men. In the two higher age groups the situation is reversed, twenty six married women as opposed to thirty six married men. This indicates that men choose wives of a slightly younger age than themselves. Out of the total adult population (i.e. those over 17 years) of 165, 57% are unmarried, 52 of the 94 men being bachelors and 43 of the 71 women spinsters.

DIAGRAM INDICATING THE LOCALITIES
 FROM WHICH THE PRESENT OCCUPIERS
 OF THE 62 ISLAND HOUSES CHOSE THEIR
 WIVES. (IN CASES WHERE THE HOUSE IS
 OCCUPIED BY CELIBATES THE PLACE OF
 RESIDENCE OF THE FATHER'S WIFE, BEFORE
 MARRIAGE, IS GIVEN INSTEAD)

THE ARROW INDICATES THE VILLAGE
 INTO WHICH A WOMAN MARRIES, EXCEPT
 IN THE CASE OF "IN MARRIAGE," WHEN IT
 INDICATES THE VILLAGE INTO WHICH A MAN
 MARRIES.

■ HOUSES IN WHICH "IN MARRIAGE" OCCURRED.
 ▨ WIFE A NON-ISLANDER, FROM MAINLAND,
 INISH TURK ETC.
 □ WIFE'S FORMER HOME NOW IN RUINS.



One of the reasons for the comparatively late age at which marriages tended to take place was the prolonged period of courtship which preceded the marriage. The women say that the men enjoy courting but do not enjoy getting married, and this observation is borne out by the length of many of the most recent courtships, which have frequently been of several years duration, sometimes as much as 10-16 years. One woman said that people courted too long on the island, then admitted that her husband and she had been courting for ten years.

The islanders are limited in their choice of partners by the depletion of their numbers, caused by emigration, and by kinship obligations which make it impossible for a number of the girls remaining on the island to marry. The fact that the islanders disapprove of the marriage of close kin narrows the choice of a partner still further, since many of the islanders are closely related. First cousins' marriage is regarded as impossible (cf. The Concept of Friendship) but marriage between second cousins and between "five akin" cousins occasionally takes place. On the whole a man prefers to marry a distant kinswoman rather than a completely unrelated person. There is a strong taboo, enforced by the Church, on marriage with a deceased wife's sister and a lightkeeper who announced his intention of contracting such a marriage was pronounced "cracked," on the basis of that remark alone. It is also regarded as extremely unlucky for two brothers to marry two sisters, or for a brother and sister from one family to marry a sister and brother from another family, though there are several cases of such marriages on the island. People can give no reason for their dislike of such marriages. There is a complete absence of any belief that such a marriage will bring about punishment of some supernatural order, for instance

sterility. It is simply regarded as undesirable.

In general the tendency of the men and women is to marry islanders rather than non-islanders. As one man said, if you marry an island girl you have the advantage of knowing her past - "There's not much a person can get away with here without everyone knowing it." This tendency to marry fellow islanders continues when islanders emigrate. They will still prefer to marry each other. It has become common for young people who are "keeping company" on the island, instead of marrying there, to emigrate, and marry when they are settled in England or America. If they do not marry fellow islanders, people will tend, even when marrying overseas, to confine their choice of partner to Mayo people rather than people from other parts of Ireland, England or America. It is very rarely that island emigrants marry such people.

Out of the 93 marriages which took place in the last ninety years, about which details are known, the following facts emerge:-

The number of wives who married in their own village	6
" " " " " " " " district	35
(i.e. a westerner marrying a westerner)	
The number of wives who married outside their own district	
(i.e. a northerner marrying an easterner)	22
Number of wives from mainland or neighbouring islands	17
Number of in-marriages, where the wife remains at her parents' home and the husband comes to live with her	12
Number of mainland men who have married in	<u>1</u>
	93

Of the mainland wives three came from Inishturk, 4 from Achill Island 4 from the mainland of Co. Mayo (Two from Belmullet, one from Westport and one from Claremorris) two from Co. Roscommon, one from Inishbofin,

a neighbouring island, and two from England (of Clare Island descent).

The reaction towards re-marriage on the island is very unfavourable, "Wasn't once enough for him? Why did he want to go and marry again," people ask about a widower who remarried twice. The kin of the deceased wife tend to resent such a remarriage and one girl who married a widower was thought so badly of for doing so that no one came to help her at her first confinement, except for one neighbour, since she had no kin of her own, and her husband's kin and his first wife's kin were too offended.

When a couple decide to marry, often after a prolonged period of courtship, during which time they are expected to be absolutely faithful to each other, before the marriage can take place the dowry must be arranged, either between the man and his prospective father in law, or between the two fathers. A dowry is still expected and will vary in amount with the wealth of the boy's family. The usual amount which a girl's father is expected to pay is £100. In two of the most recent marriages the dowries were £150 and £80 respectively. In the first the groom's family were wealthy by island standards with a two story house and a lot of stock and a cow was also included in the dowry. In the second the groom's family were in poorer circumstances, having a small northern farm with very little stock, and so, as the girl was marrying into a poorer family, the dowry was less. The bride's father paid £40 to the groom, counting it out in £1 notes, in the girl's house after the wedding, and then, according to custom, paid the other half of the dowry at the birth of the first child.

In a marriage that took place 25 years ago M, a man of forty, went to ask A for his young and very attractive daughter of seventeen. M's father was a wealthy man, whereas A had a large family, a

AN INISHTURK WEDDING, 1957.



The bride is albino, a characteristic trait in several Inishturk families. Her brother, on the extreme left, shows no signs of albinism.

The groom is thirty years older than the bride, an age difference strongly disapproved of by the Clare Islanders.

The extremely rocky terrain of Inishturk is noticeable in the background.

small holding of bad land and very little stock. However he was very proud and told M that he would not negotiate with him, but with his father, so M's father came to ask for the girl's hand for his son, bringing with him the traditional bottle of whisky, and spent the night bargaining over the dowry. At that time A had two cows, one calf, and no sheep, and though the dowry was fixed at £100 (a small amount considering the wealth of M's family) he couldn't manage to raise more than £70, even with the help of kin. It was consequently agreed that one of his son's should work for M's father at the rate of 2 shillings per day, to earn the other £30 of the dowry. If a poor man had asked for A's daughter A would not have had to pay more than about £20, "What fortune could he expect - she was going into a bad place?" but A made the sacrifice of paying a larger dowry than he could afford to increase his daughter's social standing by marrying her to a wealthy man.

If a man marries into a house it is he, and not his wife, who must pay the dowry, since it is the bride's father, and not he, who provides the land. He is expected to bring in at least £100 which is paid to the wife's father, and if he has another daughter this money will be used to provide her with a dowry. There are two parts of marriage, the actual "marriage", the religious ceremony, and the "wedding", the celebrations which take place before and after the marriage.

The guests, friends and kin of both bride and groom, will be invited to the bride's house the night before the marriage, the groom and his kin coming to the house all together just as darkness falls, where they will all be given meals of chicken, cold meats and bacon, potatoes, "porter" cake, and wine, whisky and porter in plenty. There

will be a barrel of porter by the door. After a large meal the tables are cleared away and there is dancing all night in the kitchen for the younger people, while the room below the kitchen is set aside for the older people to drink in. Tea is served during the night, as at a normal dance, and then in the morning everyone leaves the bride's house and goes to the chapel for the marriage, the bride and groom going separately to the chapel.

The wedding party then returns to the husband's house, after the marriage, where a similar celebration to that of the night before takes place, the guests dancing throughout the night and leaving the next morning.

In recent marriages some people prefer to have only one night of feasting and dancing after the marriage, instead of the night before as well, in which case the celebration will be held in the husband's house, the bride's and groom's fathers paying half the cost of entertainment each. In the last two marriages however "old style" weddings have been held with two nights of celebration.

Once a woman is married she is virtually confined to the house. Though her husband may still go to the dances in the hall and in houses he will not take her. "Once a woman is married that's the end of that - she's not supposed to move out of the house except on business." As one woman said, "When you get married you have just the four walls, and you have to please your husband. You miss the frolicking. I often think on Sunday evening what wouldn't I give for a nice picture house." The majority of men spend very little free time with their wives, the average man spending four or five nights a week visiting, or at the pub, while his wife stays at home to look after the children, but in spite of this the relationships between

husband and wife appear to be very satisfactory. The islandmen are gentle and uncomplaining and treat their wives with consideration. They are very willing to look after the children and cook meals if their wife is ill or tired, and treat their wives as equals rather than as subordinates. The affection between husband and wife is expressed in such phrases as, "When your woman dies there's nothing left in life," "When he (husband) died everything went." "He's very good - I've been married ten years and it's been a short ten years," and by such instances as J, who hates flowers and teases his wife about her fondness for them, yet when she makes a flower garden for the first time in her life, goes to great trouble to put up a fence of wire netting to protect her flowers from being eaten by sheep and asses. An old man of eighty is devoted to his ugly wife, one of nine sisters, and still maintains that he chose, "The pick of the bunch and the flower of the flock."

The general satisfactory relationship between husband and wife is such that it is difficult to imagine why there have been so few marriages in recent years. The islanders themselves account for the lack of marriage by saying that those people who remain single do so because they are too conceited, too "up on themselves" to marry, believing that, in doing so, they would be marrying beneath them. It is interesting that the people of Inishturk who laugh at the Clare Islanders for being so slow to marry, give the same reason for their celibacy.

Many celibates who regret being single and who are too old to marry now continually stress how many times they could have been married but how no one was good enough for them, and others, less conceited, have remained single, not from choice, but because the

people they wanted to marry considered them inferior. "That's the cause of a lot of people here who should have got married not getting married - because they thought no one was good enough for them", said one spinster of fifty five bitterly.

It is probably the difficulties created by the lack of potential marriage partners, caused by emigration and kinship obligations, the system of land inheritance, leading to a lack of financial independence on the part of marriageable men, the presence of sisters, or old parents in the house, parental interference, and the decline of the old marriage customs, which have caused the lack of recent marriages on the island, rather than lack of inclination to marry. The way in which emigrants marry, often as soon as they reach England or America, and the stable relationships that exist between married couples on the island indicate that the islanders are not averse to marriage, but simply that they are not able to overcome the initial difficulties any longer, now that their numbers are so depleted.

CHAPTER 11STATUS AND THE ISLAND CHIEF.

To understand the role of the Island Chief the extent to which there is any status differentiation on the island must be examined. The islanders have a marked distaste of status distinctions. A woman, sneering at one of the big farmers, and his family, who consider themselves to be of superior status to many of the other islanders said, "Of course they're "big people" (the island phrase for people of high status, used usually to refer to priests, teachers, and wealthy shopowners on the mainland) but it's all the same who you are when you leave the island." This knowledge, that however highly a man may estimate himself in island society, when he emigrates he knows that he will be regarded by members of the wider society merely as an islander, with no claim to higher status than any other islander, may account to some extent for the lack of status differentiation on the island.

The islanders are reluctant to assume positions of leadership and authority, as a result of which there is not only little status differentiation on the island, but also an absence of political organisation.

With the exception of the Island Chief, who acts as the figure-head, or the representative of the island "vis-a-vis" the outside world, the island has no organised political authority in the shape of a leader, or an old men's council. Though "age demands respect," the only way in which the old men assert their authority in everyday affairs is by indirect means, expressing their views at visiting houses, or at the discussions after Mass on Sundays.

The only occasions on which there is any need for political

authority are when serious disputes or crises arise, and at such times men who are held in general respect by the community assemble to discuss the matter in question. Such occasions are few and far between, but in the last year there have been two such instances, the first when a curragh containing two road inspectors, an Inishturk girl on her way to England, and two mainlanders, disappeared between Clare and Accony, on a dark night and was never seen again. The islanders organised a search of the coasts and adjacent waters in the hope of finding some of the bodies of those drowned, after the decision to do so had been made by the priest, doctor, the two big farmers, the boat owners, and some of the other islandmen held in high esteem, at a meeting held in the church hall. A few weeks later a second meeting was called to discuss the amounts people would be willing to contribute towards providing medical equipment, costing £80, for the island cripple, a popular man in his forties, suffering from multiple sclerosis.

Warner proposes three criteria for the determination of status differentiation in a community, the difference existing between members of a community in:

- a) consumption patterns.
- b) family rituals.
- c) leisure time activities.

These show a remarkable uniformity throughout the island community, conditioned as they are by two factors, economic organisation and religious belief.

All the islanders, with the possible exception of the innkeeper and boatkeepers, are dependent primarily on farming for their livelihood. They farm in the same way, work approximately the same hours, and make, with the exception of a few of the owners of large holdings,

approximately the same profit from the sale of their stock. There is no full time specialisation which might set a man apart, financially or socially, from his neighbours, and consequently, because of this almost identical economic background, there are only very minor differences in the standards of living and patterns of consumption in the island families. This is manifested by the almost identical quality of the furnishings, and nature of the diet in the island homes. There is no indication of any kind in the appearance of an island home that would enable one to judge, even after spending two or three days living there, the income level of the owner.

The remarkable similarity in the standard of living in the island homes is due also to a great extent to the islanders' attitude towards the accumulation of money. Material possessions are not regarded as significant indications of status. Only one house on the island, for instance, has two stories, and it is one of the very few in which there is enough spare room to enable one room to be set aside as a parlour, instead of being used as a combined bedroom and parlour, as in most of the smaller houses. Yet its owner, a small farmer with a thirty acre farm, is not regarded as in any way superior to the rest of the islanders by virtue of his fine house, and the other islanders never express envy of him.

Though there is a strong positive value set on hard work and expressed in such remarks as, "When you aren't fit to work it's better to be dead," and "As long as you're able to work and you have a bit of interest in it you never feel the time passing," there is no value set on the accumulation of money. One man remarked on the difference between the island attitude to the accumulation of money and that of the mainlanders in Louisburgh and the nearby villages. On the mainland the people look down on those who do not make an effort to

accumulate money through hard work, whereas on the island, though there is a positive value set on hard work, it is on hard work for its own sake and not as a means of making money. People who are miserly, or who are always trying to earn money by such means as gathering and selling winkles, are not regarded on the island with admiration, but as "mad after money" or "cracked."

This attitude is also shown in the reverence that the islanders have for education, not as a means to making money, but as an end in itself. (Later in the chapter I discuss the importance of education to the islanders, in relation to the preferred personality type.) Parents do not, as a rule, have any ambitions to educate their children to enable them to obtain better jobs overseas. Though they attach great importance to their children learning as much as possible at school, and passing their Primary examination before leaving school at fourteen, it is rare for a parent to send his child to the mainland to receive further education at a secondary school once he or she has passed the qualifying Primary examination. Because of the shortage of labour on the island children's education terminates abruptly after passing the Primary examination, when they are taken away from school, even if they show great promise, to help their parents on the farm, until they emigrate. One woman told me that her 16 year old son was very clever at school, and that she would have liked him to go to secondary school on the mainland, "But it was hard on him - he was needed on the farm - we couldn't manage without him, and he was the eldest son," so he was taken from school to help on the farm at 14.

Only a few families are able to send one or more of their children to school on the mainland, mostly in cases where the parents are financially on a more secure basis than the average, or where they

have kin on the mainland who will finance the child while at school. In recent years the only children who have received secondary education on the mainland are a boy of exceptional ability from a poor family, who won a scholarship to school and later to university, two girls financed by their mother's kin on the mainland, with whom they lived, another financed by her father's brother, a priest, the daughters of the mail and cargo boat owners and the innkeeper's two sons. For most children, education is of great importance until they leave school at fourteen, when it comes to an abrupt end.

Because of the Catholic religion family rituals tend to centre round such Christian festivities as Christmas, Easter, Whit, and the Saints' days, and to a lesser extent Sundays. There is virtually no difference in family rituals from house to house of the type discussed by Littlejohn¹, where he remarks upon the differences in the serving and eating of tea as indications of higher or lower status, in Eskdalemuir. In the sixteen families with which I was on familiar enough terms to eat frequently with the family, without any of the ceremony that accompanies a formal visit, there was no difference in the way in which meals were served or eaten, or in the roles of the participants. This is primarily due to the similarity in consumption patterns, which does not permit a difference in family rituals.

The leisure time activities of the islanders centre round dances, visiting and football, and such activities are open to anyone, regardless of status. There are no associations or formal organisations on the island with exclusive membership, which might bring about status differentiation. The only approximation to such an association is the poker playing clique which, though in theory is open to any member of

the community who cares to participate in the game, in practice, for economic reasons, is limited to salaried people such as the teachers, lightkeepers, and to the big farmers, who do not find playing for high stakes a deterrent to joining the clique. The only other islander who is a member of this clique, apart from the innkeeper, and one of the big farmers, is a small farmer who has enough money to play, and no family responsibilities. The rest of the islanders regard the playing of poker as a waste of time, and the amount of money that changes hands in a night at the game as "ridiculous." By virtue of their affiliation to the clique, its members tend to be set apart from the other islanders.

Wealth, or the possession of a salary, tends to set people apart from the rest of the community, if they are members of the poker clique, but those people who do not play poker, and yet who are wealthy by island standards, such as the boat owners, are not set apart from the rest of the community.

Apart from the poker players, the only other wealthy islander who is set apart in any way from the rest of the community is one of the two big farmers, who has gained his status partly through the possession of money, partly through his scholarship, and partly through his physical prowess. He is very well read and has a reputation for scholarship, acting as the representative of the island in such matters as writing to the County Council to make complaints and requests on behalf of the islanders. He will write letters for any islander who wishes him to do so. He has great physical strength and is the leader of the curragh crew which won the county championships for several years, and is admired as "a great man in a boat." He earns a considerable amount of money both farming and lobster fishing, and is always ready to help people in trouble with a loan of money.

He lent one man in poor circumstances money to be paid back without interest when possible, and provided another, who could not afford a wedding ring for his wife, with the requisite money. He acts as the intermediary between island and mainland in political matters, and is extremely well thought of by the rest of the community.

Since there is very little status differentiation on the island there are consequently few ways in which such differentiation is expressed. The chief way in which a person's status is indicated is by the use of a surname to refer to someone of high status, in both direct and indirect speech. The innkeeper's wife will usually be referred to as Mrs. M, and the island teacher as Mrs. H instead of by their Christian names, to show that they are regarded as of higher status. Conversely, if an islander wishes to show disregard for a person he will call him by a diminutive of his name, "Tomeen" or "Mawtcheen," instead of "Tommy" or "Martin", though not to his face, as to do so would be a grave insult.

One of the big farmers complains that he and the other big farmer are treated differently from the other farmers by virtue of their status. Whereas the other farmers give each other "swoop days," working on another man's farm for a day or two in return for the time he has spent working on their own farms, without any payment being exchanged, they will not exchange labour with the big farmers, because they do not expect them to be willing to work on their farms in return. They will consequently only work for them for payment.

The custom by which, at a dance, the hostess would select the "big people," to be invited into the room for tea first, was an indication of status, which, because of its universal unpopularity on the island, has almost died out.

Similarly, at a funeral, before the corpse is taken from the

house to the chapel for burial, all the islanders gathered at the house must wait for the departure of the funeral procession until a few of the men of higher status (those of the poker clique, the big farmers, boatmen, and innkeeper as a rule) have been asked into the house to drink whisky with the "friends" of the deceased. This recognition of status at dances and funerals tends to cause embarrassment and jealousy, and the dislike of such concrete expressions of status indicate the island attitude towards status differentiation.

Apart from those few people who form a slightly higher status group than the rest of the community, because they are wealthy by island standards, or because they are admired for scholarship, there is no other recognition of status differentiation on the island, with the exception of the recognition accorded the "Chief."

There is however a comparatively high incidence of people who consider that for some reason or another, they are superior to the rest of the community, and expect to be treated with respect on this account. This opinion is not shared by the rest of the community who tend to frown on conceited people, people who are, in island phraseology, "up on themselves."

One such family, who are renowned for their snobbishness, held a station dance in their house and the daughter made a large iced cake, on which the words "Cead Mile Failte," ("A hundred thousand welcomes,") were inscribed in icing. This cake was placed in the centre of the tea table, on which there was a great display of food. Some of the young boys, seeing that it was uncut, grubbed huge pieces out of the cake with their hands, completely spoiling it, simply as an excuse to humiliate the hostess. This was regarded by all the guests as a great joke.

The mail boat owners tend to be resented because they have a

larger income than the majority of the islanders and need to do less work on the land, while numerous close relatives in the States provide them with most of their clothes, and they are better dressed than the average islander. They have become conceited in consequence, and the sons and daughters set themselves apart from the other young people by very rarely attending the dances in the church hall, or in the houses, and by being unwilling to "keep company," with islanders, preferring to court mainlanders, since they have more opportunity to visit the mainland than their contemporaries, being near the Quay, in possession of the means of transport, and having kin on the mainland. "They never go with (court) anyone here," the other young islanders say, with a certain amount of resentment.

People who consider themselves to be of higher status than the rest of the community attempt to maintain their status by establishing social distance between themselves and their fellow islanders. In a society where status is not clearly enough defined for social distance to be established automatically, simply by virtue of one's membership of different status groups, such people must content themselves with creating their own social distance, by refusing to take part in customary forms of social interaction. The mail boat owner's sons and daughters do not "keep company" with islanders, and rarely go to dances, and they, along with others who hold themselves in high esteem, tend to participate very rarely in visiting other houses. This may be in emulation of the members of the poker clique, who tend to confine most of their leisure time to playing poker, rather than in making friendly visits to neighbours. Those with pretensions to status tend to emulate them, limiting the circle within which they visit to the few houses in which they feel the occupants have a status

approximating to their own. In some cases, they do not visit at all, and discourage people from visiting them to such an extent that their social interaction with the rest of the community becomes almost negligible. Such people are regarded with resentment because they do not set any value on what to the islanders is one of the most important virtues, the willingness to be hospitable, and because they refuse to reciprocate in social relationships with their neighbours.

Though the system of address on the island tends to minimise tendencies towards status differentiation it can also be used to indicate a desire to maintain social distance. Everyone calls everyone else by their Christian names, and an islander will not refer to another by his surname unless he is talking to a stranger to the island, or unless he wishes to indicate his dislike of the person, or, as mentioned earlier, to indicate respect. One woman said to me that she will call women whom she knows only slightly, and with whom she has no desire to improve her acquaintance, by their surnames, "Mrs. Winters" etc. and such a form of address (used here in indirect speech only) is also frequent between sisters-in-law, especially when there is any hostility between them. One woman asked me, "Why do you call Owen Gallagher "Mr. Gallagher" - is it to show you don't like him?" - since to call a person, to their face, by their surname, unless they are of high status, for instance the priest, doctor, or teacher, is regarded as an expression of dislike.

Usually, when an islander addresses another it will be by his Christian name alone. In indirect speech however there would frequently be confusion caused in referring to a man as "Tony", if there were several men of that name on the island, and the surname may also be used - "Tony O'Malley." But frequently there are not only two or more people with the same Christian name, but with the

same surname as well. They are then referred to in indirect speech by their own Christian name, with their father's, grandfather's or mother's name added - "Mick Micky", "John Patrick," "Charley Peggy" or "Mary Ann Lizzie." There are at present three men on the island called Brian O'Malley, who are referred to in conversation as "Brian Mick," "Brian Ed," and "Brian Johnny." On the mainland this system of naming is carried even farther, the name of both father and grandfather following the man's or woman's Christian name, instead of one or the other, so that such names as "Patrick Pat (f) Paddy (g.f.)" or "Paddy Dick Michael," are in frequent use.

There is no special reason for the choice of name for the suffix. It can be that of father, mother or grandfather. As soon as a child is christened it must, unless it has a very unusual name, be distinguished from others bearing the same name, and its father's name will be added as a suffix. For instance Paddy has four children, John Paddy, Austy Paddy, Mary Paddy and Dolores, who is not referred to as Dolores Paddy, since there is no one else with her name on the island. If the child's grandfather still owns and controls the house in which the child is born, not having handed over responsibility for the management of the farm to his son, the child's father, then his son's children may be called by his name rather than his son's. For instance, William lives with his son Charley William, his daughter Katy William, his daughter-in-law Katy Barney (her father's name) and Charley's two children who are referred to, not as Nora Charley and Pat Charley, but as Nora William and Pat William.

A person is usually called by his mother's name, if his father died very early, or if he and another man on the island have the same Christian and surnames, and their fathers also have the same name. John Lizzie O'Malley would have been called John Michael after his

father, to distinguish him from other John O'Malleys on the island if there had not been another John (Michael) O'Malley on the island. Consequently he was called after his mother instead.

Married women are usually referred to by their maiden names, Maggie Murray, or Nora Burns, and never as Mrs. Grady, or Mrs. Flynn. In some cases though, their husband's Christian name may be added as a suffix, "Mary Mark" for instance.

Occasionally too, instead of a kinsman's name being used as a suffix, the name of the village in which a person was born will be used instead - "Pat Lecarrow," or "Austy Glen".

Though such distinguishing names are in common use on the island people always refer to someone in direct speech by their Christian name alone, and never by their distinguishing name, since it would be regarded as an insult to do so. One man, Austy Dick, was furious when a mainland buyer, visiting the island, accosted him on the road, saying "Well, Austy Dick, will you sell your cow?" He replied angrily, "That's not my form of address," and was so offended that he refused to sell his cow, though the mainland buyer had meant no offence, since in Louisburgh it is regarded as natural to address a man by his distinguishing name. Another islandman was very embarrassed, on a trip to Galway with a mainlander, to be addressed continually as Michael Joe, instead of merely as Michael, and became very offended as the day wore on.

The constant use of Christian names on the island, and the almost complete absence of the use of the surname in addressing fellow islanders, tends to prevent attempts at status differentiation. Names used and applied as children, when there is no consciousness of status differentiation, continue to be used in adult life, and this practice tends to minimise social distance between the members of the island community.

The Island Chief

The preferred personality type on the island is the quiet, unassuming man, inoffensive, completely lacking in conceit, intelligent, scholarly, witty, and a skilled conversationalist.

Admiration for quiet and inoffensive behaviour is expressed in the phrase frequently used about a well-liked individual - "He is a nice class of a man - he would never say anything (unpleasant) to anyone." Those who put on airs, who are "up on themselves," and who are constantly bragging about their travels, their experiences, and about their "big friends" on the mainland, are regarded as "ridiculous".

The man who is a good conversationalist and possesses a fund of interesting stories, and who has the ability to make others laugh, the "jolly" man, ranks high in the estimation of the islanders, especially if he combines this quality with a certain degree of intelligence and scholarship. A person "with education," (i.e. a person who has been educated at the island school but who has absorbed and retained more knowledge than most) and who is well-read, who can write a good, well-set out letter, and who is able to stand his ground in meeting and conversing with "educated people," such as priests, doctors and teachers, is greatly admired. "He only came from the island school, but you'd never have known it - he was awful well educated - he could talk to priests or anyone like that who came to the island."

Of a neighbour, an educated, well-read person who is admired because of the ease with which he can converse with educated people from the outside world, but who does not put on airs, and is consequently both popular and well thought of, a woman says, "He will come and sit with people like us (a group of three middle aged women) and

talk about what we're talking about, but if he meets with educated people he can talk to them just as easily."

The fact that the preferred personality type is the quiet, scholarly man, unwilling to thrust himself forward into a position of leadership, and the fact that the majority of the islanders tend to approximate to this type, may account for the rise of the "Island Chief", whose personality is not only atypical, but differs markedly from the preferred personality type.

Ned is a bachelor of seventy five, large, fat and unprepossessing, who has, for the past thirty five years or so, made a continual effort to establish himself as the chief of the island. Probably because he is a forceful, thrusting character, anxious to take on the responsibility that none of the other islanders want, he has succeeded in establishing himself in this role, if not in the opinion of the islanders themselves, then at least in the opinion of the outside world.

In everyday life the islanders have little need of a chief to make decisions for them, to settle offences and disputes, since whenever difficulties of this character arise, which is rarely, the older and more respected men will settle the matter by discussion and make their opinions known to the rest of the islanders. It is, in the main, in contacts with the outside world that the island needs a representative, a figurehead, who is able and willing to act as an intermediary between the island and outside world, and to speak on its behalf, and it is in this capacity that Ned acts as the Island Chief. The big farmer, who acts in this capacity to a lesser extent, is unwilling to "make a show of himself," as Ned does, preferring to act in a less spectacular way to achieve his ends.

Ned is a purely self-appointed chief. Before he started to

create this role for himself there had been no one person who acted in this capacity. On the mainland, where he is regarded as the island's figurehead, he is known as "Chief", and his remarks and opinions, in newspaper reports of events at which he was present, receive considerable publicity. He attends all functions, such as football matches and curragh races, in which the islandmen participate, and regards himself as responsible for the good conduct of the islanders on such occasions. On one occasion he became very annoyed with some of the younger men for rejoicing too openly over the victory of the island team at a mainland football match, and told them angrily to "Shut yer great clobs," (mouths) when they persisted in cheering.

When the Accony team came to the island to play a match Ned was at the Quay to meet them and to read an address of welcome. It was he who threw in the ball at the commencement of the game, and who escorted the mainlanders to the boat on their departure.

When Devalera visited the island several years ago on an election campaign it was Ned who welcomed him with a speech, and who conducted him round the island, who explained to him the island's need for a doctor, and a safer landing place on the mainland. It is he who welcomes all official visitors to the island and greets them on behalf of the rest of the community. He is not asked to do so, nor is he expected to do so. The islanders have no interest in leadership and see no necessity for it. They do not regard Ned as filling an important position but rather as taking unnecessary responsibility on himself.

Ned expects to be treated with great respect both at home and abroad. In spite of the opinion of his neighbours that he should not leave his old sister alone in the house to attend the curragh races at

Galway he said, "I must go to Galway where I have been asked to go, and where I am expected (by mainlanders) to go." On his return from the races, at which the island team was victorious, he was presented with a flag in Louisburgh to wave as the boat in which he, and the crew, were travelling, came into the island harbour. As the boat approached the harbour he stood up in the prow waving the flag, but seeing that there was not a single person at the Quayside to welcome the crew's return, except for one man peering incuriously round the gable of the inn, he threw away the flag in disgust - "What's the use in this place - there's never anyone to meet you - there's no good in doing anything for the people here." He feels that his efforts are not appreciated by the rest of the islanders, whom he regards as beyond help. They, however, explain that they do not enjoy formal welcomes, and speech making, and the recognition of leaders - "The people aren't like that here," they say.

The fact that they permit Ned to make speeches and to claim the Chieftainship of the island, and that there is no feeling of resentment, only of amusement, at his assumption of chiefly status, indicates that the islanders are not unwilling to have a chief of this sort, only that they are unwilling to assume responsibility themselves. They do not resent its assumption by a deviant personality such as Ned.

His relationship with the islanders is not one of chief and subjects. It is more of a joking relationship in which Ned plays the part of buffoon and jester, a general source of ridicule, while at the same time his willingness to expose himself to this ridicule gives him a certain status, by setting him apart from the rest of the islanders, the majority of whom are extremely sensitive to ridicule. When an islander is asked by Ned is called the chief he will invariably

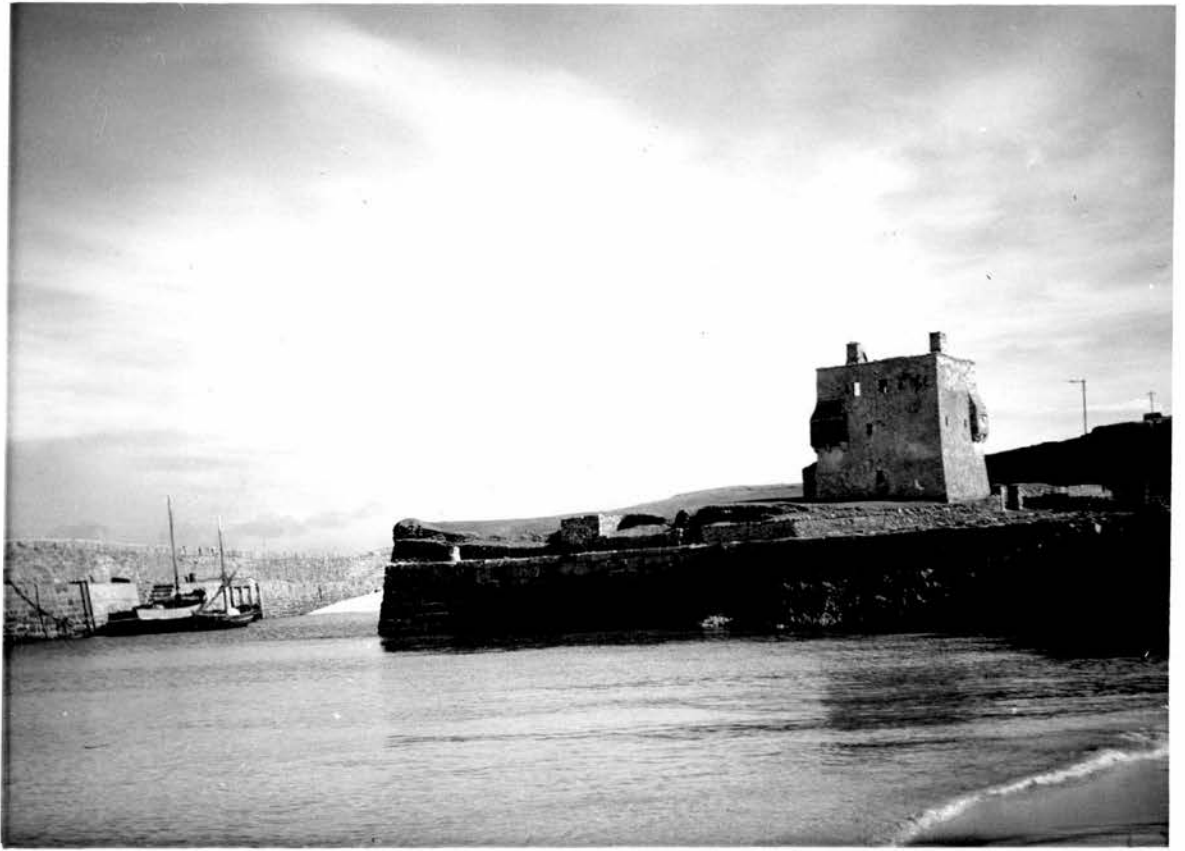
reply with amusement, "just as a joke." They all say that he is "cracked," but harmless, and admit that he is really the best possible man to meet delegations and visitors to the island, because he has the faculty of being able to express himself well, and to compose a good address on those occasions on which someone is required to meet such people and welcome them.

To the islanders Ned is almost a legendary figure. He is the only person about whom they will talk for hours on end. Every time his name is mentioned it raises a laugh - "We enjoy him," people say, "He's a great sport."

He is regarded as ludicrous because of his vanity. He continually tells stories about his purely fictitious exploits as a member of the Irish Republican Army, and about the high esteem in which he is held, not only in Mayo, but throughout Ireland. He recently caused much amusement by going to Westport to buy himself a new raincoat in which to appear at mainland functions, which, at his age, was regarded as a ridiculous extravagance.

He is scorned for his laziness and meanness. He grows very few crops, and never cuts turf from his own bogs, or pays someone to cut it for him, but relies on what he can steal at night from his neighbours' clamps, or from his immediate neighbour's turf house. He is often without turf altogether and his old sister has to try and cook in winter over screwed-up paper and twigs, broken from the bushes surrounding the house, while the house is cold, damp and fireless. People say he believes he will live for ever and that is why he refuses to cut turf from his own bogs, keeping them in reserve, so that he will not exhaust them long before his death. He allows his cattle to graze freely on the land of the three farms adjacent to his own and makes no attempt to keep them on his own land in spite

THE QUAY.



The Quay is dominated by the sixteenth century castle of Granuaile O'Malley, the sea queen of the west of Ireland, and it is from here that she is reputed to have launched attacks with her ships against the fleet of Queen Elizabeth I of England.

of frequent complaints.

The chief reason for his vanity, and his belief that he is vastly superior to everyone else on the island, lies in the fact that he firmly believes that he is directly descended from Granuaile, and that he is the only islander who can claim such a direct descent from her. He claims her, with a complete disregard for fact, since she died four hundred years ago, as a great aunt, three generations back on his father's side, and refers to the sixteenth century castle in which she is believed to have lived as "My aunt's castle." Because he claims such close kinship with Granuaile the islanders regard Ned as an "ould eejit" and say, "For a man of his age he hasn't a spark of sense." As one man said, "Ned is a topic of conversation in most houses on the island, but he doesn't uphold the prestige he boasts about (his descent from Granuaile) - a man who is mean and who goes around stealing turf like that."

People delight in annoying him and hearing him curse, because he has a richly colourful vocabulary and a powerful voice. They continually tell stories of how they have "taken a rise out of him," just to hear him curse. One man tells of how, when Devalera was elected President of the Republic in 1932, Ned suggested that, since the islanders were "Dev. men", every village on the island should light a bonfire in celebration. He went from fire to fire playing patriotic songs on his melodeon. "Of course none of us cared much about Dev., it wasn't all that important - we just enjoyed Ned." When Ned reached the last fire, on the beach near the Quay, he made a speech, and two of the boys lifted him shoulder high, as though to honour him, and then, to the vast amusement of all the onlookers, dropped him into a deep "flash" of water.

They recall too the day when Ned, going one night to the Quay

in his best clothes, to a station dance, fell into a hole dug in the sand by the boys, as he took a short cut across the strand in the dark, emerged cursing vigorously, shook himself free of sand, and marched on, only to fall into another hole three yards farther on. The boys hidden behind a sand bank to watch, can still remember, fifteen years later, his forceful and picturesque language. Numerous other tricks of a similar character, which have been played on Ned, are continually recalled in conversation by the islanders who take a constant delight in making a fool of him, even now when he has reached an advanced age, which would, in a normal person, entitle him to a certain degree of respect. It is significant that there is no-one else on the island on whom tricks are played to such an extent. People who are "up on themselves," may very occasionally be teased to restore their sense of proportion, as was the case with the hostess and the iced cake, mentioned earlier in this chapter, but the only person who undergoes such continual teasing and mocking is Ned.

The fact that Ned is such a source of amusement and enjoyment to the rest of the community would suggest that, were it not for the fact that he possesses certain other qualities for which he is admired, and which outweigh his less favourable qualities, he would be the last person to occupy the role of chief (albeit self-appointed) and representative of the island.

The islanders admire Ned partly because he is a fount of historical knowledge. He takes a great pride in the history of the island, which, especially in matters connected with Granuaile, has a very personal interest for him, and in this he acts as the guardian of tradition, because the majority of the islanders admit to knowing very little about such matters, and if asked a question which they

cannot answer will always say, "Oh I wish Ned was here - now there's a man who'd be able to tell you." Though they appear to ridicule traditions of connection with Granuaile, in reality they take a certain amount of covert pride in them, and the fact that Ned knows so much more about such traditions than anyone else helps to set him apart from the rest of the community.

There is in fact a possible relationship between his status and his putative descent from Granuaile. The concept of all members of the kin group sharing to a lesser extent in the glory or disgrace of a particular member of the group may perhaps result in the belief that Ned, as a descendant (actual or putative) of Granuaile, partakes in some of her glory, and as the person who claims closest descent from her, he has a claim to high status.

Ned is admired too for his patriotism. Before Ireland gained independence Ned acted as rate-collector for the British Government, but, instead of paying over the money he had collected from the islanders to the British Government, he paid it to the Irish Government, not then in power, and as a result, "There were two English destroyers here after Ned (who had fled to England) and the whole island was searched for him." As a reward for this patriotic action he was given an Irish Republican Army pension when the Irish Government came into power. This is always held as a great point in his favour.

Another quality for which Ned is admired is his ability to make speeches and tell stories. People regret the passing of the old "seanachies", or story tellers, and of the men thirty or forty years ago, who were reputed to be wonderful at telling stories, which could be repeated over and over again without losing their flavour, because they were so well told, and so interesting. Everyone admits that Ned, with his gift for telling stories, his picturesque turns of

phrase and colourful curses, is the only islander who still compares in any way with the old "seanachies" and is the one remaining man on the island who can tell stories properly.

He is admired too for his personality, because he is so sure of his own superiority, and has such delusions of grandeur, that even in his wildest rages, when he has lost all his dignity, he never loses his self-respect, or his scorn for the rest of the islanders, as lesser beings. He is atypical in that he is unworried by ridicule, and does not resent being made the subject of gossip, something that everyone else in the community fears, or is acutely sensitive about.

Since the vast majority of the islanders approximate to the preferred personality type in their reluctance to assume leadership Ned does not receive full recognition as a leader. If the preferred personality type was the forceful, thrusting, dominant man, Ned would probably be recognised as chief with full honours but since it is the quiet, scholarly man who is admired, Ned, as a deviant personality, is only recognised as leader in this indirect way. The homage paid to him is not in admiration and respect but in practical jokes and ridicule. Nevertheless it is homage in that it is a recognition of his personality and is accompanied by a complete absence of resentment of his assumption of the role of chief. Since the islanders are content to let someone like Ned, whom they appear to scorn and ridicule as much as respect, act as their representative to the outside world, it can be assumed that his status is higher than it would at first appear to be and that, in a different society, he would be recognised and respected as a chief.

CHAPTER 12

SOCIAL CONTROL & PUBLIC OPINION

In every society social control must satisfy two demands. It must compel the individual to conform to the desired patterns of behaviour of the society, and it must provide the means whereby disputes between members of this society can be settled.

Mechanisms of social control on the island are of the simplest character - as an islandman said, "The laws of nature are the only laws we have and God knows, they're enough to contend with."

There is no formal legal organisation to protect the community from attacks by anti-social individuals, since a few years ago the local authorities in Castlebar decided that the great decline in the island population had reduced the numbers of islanders so greatly that they were no longer justified in maintaining resident police on the island, and consequently withdrew them. The islanders now have no organised form of social control in the nature of police, a chief with powers to settle disputes and punish offenders, or a council of old and respected men to make decisions for the good of the community.

There is a general feeling among the islanders that such organised social control is unnecessary. There are no records of crimes of violence such as murder or rape, or even adultery, or theft, taking place, and people express surprise at the suggestion that such crimes might occur. Everyone regards the possibility of a serious crime taking place as out of the question.

The only times at which a need is felt for organised social control are in disputes over property, or when situations arise when decisions must be made for the welfare of the community as a

whole. Such occasions are very rare. People can recall only a very few in the last forty years.

One of these involved a dispute between two brothers over the ownership of their deceased father's land and house. A court was held in the school by the chapel at which one of the big farmers acted as the judge and two other men, one a cattle buyer from the mainland, as deputies. They succeeded in settling the dispute to the satisfaction of both parties.

In 1921 four men, a shopowner, the innkeeper, the teacher and one of the big farmers, went to Castlebar to bring to the notice of the Mayo County Council the need for improvement in the standards of living on the island, and for a resident doctor.

In 1933 a dispute arose when two men both claimed a lamb as their own. The dispute became bitter and the contestants wanted to take the case to lawyers on the mainland, but one of the big farmers, whose advice they had both sought independently, persuaded them not to. To settle the dispute he bought the lamb from one man, and sent a neighbour to buy it secretly for him from the other man, thus paying the price of two lambs to settle the dispute. Both men were satisfied with the arrangement, since each believed that the other had got nothing from the sale.

In 1927 the islanders formed a council, the main purpose of which was to lend money, with interest, to those who had, for instance, lost a cow, and could not afford to buy another to replace it, unless they were given a loan, or to anyone who wanted to "get into sheep", since at that time many of the islanders had no sheep at all, sheep rearing still being comparatively unimportant. This was a credit society presided over by a committee, consisting of the big farmer, with the teacher, and two other respected farmers to help him. This committee

provided the loans. Meetings were held after Mass on Sundays in the western school, and in addition to the provision of loans, disputes were discussed and settled. The islanders say that this was the nearest approximation to an old men's council that has ever existed on Clare. It lasted for about twelve years and came to an end when borrowers did not pay back either the capital borrowed, or even the interest on the loan.

In 1942 a Parish Council was formed, with the priest as chairman, and a representative from each village on the committee, to discuss matters of general importance to the island, and to deal with appeals to the local authorities in Castlebar. This council only lasted for two years, after which it was disbanded because there was no further need for it.

On the rare occasions when the islanders require decisions to be made on their behalf by responsible and respected members of the community, a committee, headed by the priest, assisted by the doctor, the two big farmers, the boatmen and one or two other respected middle aged farmers, will assemble to discuss the situation in question. Recently, when five people were drowned in a curragh on their way from Clare to Accony the committee^{met} to discuss the need to avert any further disasters of this nature, and to compose a written request to the County Council asking them to provide the islanders with better landing facilities at Accony.

In general, apart from situations of this sort, which necessitate contact with local authorities on the mainland, and which are of rare occurrence, there is very little in the nature of internal disputes on the island. What disputes there are arise chiefly over property. The two most serious offences that can arise with regard to property are the damaging of some one else's crops, and the killing

of his sheep.

Because of the lack of adequate fences on the farms people must watch their cattle constantly to make sure that they do not trespass on to their neighbours' land. In theory people are expected to maintain their own side of the common fence, which separates their land from that of their neighbours, and if they do not they will be blamed if their cattle stray. In practice the fences separating one farm from another are frequently little more than broken mud banks, through which livestock wander unchecked from farm to farm, damaging crops as they go.

Considerable ill-feeling is caused over straying animals and badly maintained fences. If a man finds another man's animals damaging his crops he will usually content himself with driving them outside the boundary wall on to the commonage, where it may take the owner several days to find them. He is recognised as having the right to do so. One old man, with a reputation of being very easily angered, used to solve the problem of straying animals by incarcerating any strays he found on his property in his barn, without food, for several days, until it pleased him to release them. Because of the fear of angering him no one dared to demand their animals back until he released them, when they took care not to let them stray so easily again. His own nephew, living next door, was not exempt from this punishment - "He used to do that even to his nephew - W. was terrified of him," said a neighbour.

Compensation is never paid, or demanded, for damage to crops. The offended farmer visits the owner of the stray animals, or waits to meet him on the road, when he will abuse him, insulting him and all his family, and recalling all the unfavourable things he has ever heard about him, to which the other man replies in a similar insulting

manner. This interchange of insults may result in the two men refusing to speak to each other for several months afterwards, but people do not take each other to law (in mainland courts) for such an offence, nor do they ask a third party to act as intermediary in demanding compensation. They prefer to settle the matter between themselves, simply by expressing their anger and letting off steam, rather than by demanding compensation. There is no real resentment when damage to crops occurs, since it is recognised to be an accident, which anyone might unwittingly run the risk of causing by negligence.

Sheep killing is a more serious matter. When a man realises his sheep are being killed he will keep watch until he discovers whose dog is responsible for the killing, then he follows the dog home and informs the owner that it has turned into a killer and has killed his sheep. The owner will immediately destroy the dog and will offer compensation to the other man, usually the full price of all the sheep killed. The owner of the sheep will, however, usually accept only the "colour of the money," rather than the full value of the sheep, since he realises that this again is something that might happen to anyone, and has no resentment against the man whose dog has turned a killer. "'The colour of the money' is usually all that's accepted, say a shilling a sheep for the luck to remain. This never causes a row. It is regarded as being very unlucky to have a sheep killed by dogs. Also a man who refuses to pay is thought mean, and if a man accepts full compensation he loses his good name and there is bitterness afterwards." During the last two years there have been two cases of sheep killing, and in both cases the offending dogs were killed, full compensation offered and token compensation accepted. For the man whose dog was responsible for the killing the loss of his dog is punishment enough, without the additional burden

"LOOK AT THOSE CROOKED RIDGES!"



The islanders take great pride in the appearance of their farms, and especially in the appearance of their potato fields. The ridges must be absolutely straight, and the person who has not made his ridges perfectly straight will be ridiculed. The owner of this field is ridiculed by every passer by because his ridges are crooked, and is consequently regarded as a bad farmer.

of paying for the sheep, and the islanders recognise this.

One of the property rights that is most jealously guarded is that to turf. Turf stealing is regarded as a serious offence. Because the islanders do not have turf stacks near the house, but prefer to have their stacks of turf up in the bogs, it is very easy for people to steal turf from these unguarded stacks. A distinction is made between those who steal turf because they are too lazy to cut their own, and too mean to pay someone else to cut it for them, and those who are too old, and too poor to be able to get turf. One old spinster, living alone, in this position, is known to steal sods of turf occasionally from her neighbours' stacks, but they say that they turn a blind eye to this because they feel sorry for her.

The "chief" of the island is a different case. He too is a persistent turf thief, though he is strong enough to cut his own turf, and wealthy enough to pay someone to cut it. He shamelessly steals turf from a neighbour's stack, and even goes so far as to take turf from another neighbour's shed while he is out fishing. One evening as he was standing by his neighbour's stack, filling a large sack with turf, his neighbour, hiding behind the stack, emerged, and ordered him to replace every sod, which he did, very resentfully, grumbling, "Caught at last, and caught rotten," (by a despicable trick). Partly because he is old and partly because his neighbours are so amused by his behaviour that they can tolerate his stealing, no attempt has as yet been made to punish him.

An example of the way in which a younger man, a continual turf thief, was punished, demonstrates the typical island method of coping with undesirable behaviour. The offender is not confronted and openly accused, but it is brought to his notice more subtly that he has caused

offence. There is, whenever possible, no direct contact between the offended and the offender, since the islanders dislike disputes and try to avoid them whenever they can achieve results by more indirect means.

One man of forty, M., was continually stealing turf from his neighbour's stack, though he was fit and strong and would have had no difficulty in cutting his own if he were not lazy. After this had been going on for some months, the neighbour began to notice that his supply of turf was dwindling, kept watch and noticed M. stealing it. He saw that M. always took turf from the end of the stack where he imagined its loss would be less noticeable. He then made a hole in a sod of turf, and inserted a firework in it, and replaced the sod at the end of the stack. M. came along that night, filled his sack with turf and took it home. His wife was roasting a goose over the fire as he came in and asked him to throw more turf on the fire, which he did. Suddenly the firework, set off by the heat, exploded with so much force that the goose was shot straight across the room, and both M. and his wife received a violent shock. M. realised at once that his stealing had been noticed and resented, and that this was a warning to him to desist, and he stopped stealing turf from then onwards.

Disputes occasionally occur too over small matters such as the ownership of wells. The person on whose land a spring well is found or through which a stream runs, is regarded as owning that spring or the particular part of the stream that runs through his land. The well will be referred to by his name, "Antony Malley's well," for instance. The people from neighbouring houses, who have no spring well on their land, will have the right to use this well, and a man has no right to block up the path his neighbours use to reach the

well, and would be condemned for doing so. He has the right to block up the path to the stream if he wants to, since people can always use some other stream, but water from a spring well is essential, and no one has the right to deprive anyone else of the use of it.

The users of a spring well are expected to be jointly responsible for cleaning it of moss and weeds in the spring, and will take turns to clean it annually. Disputes occasionally arise over whose turn it is to clean the well. In one case two women both refused to clean it, each maintaining that it was the turn of the other to do so. Relations between them on this account became so strained that they were not on speaking terms for several months, until a mutual kinsman came to stay with one of them, when the other cleaned the well without any more argument. As in most island disputes the individuals concerned solved the problem between themselves without recourse to a third party, and with the minimum of violence and anger.

Since crimes and anti-social actions occur so rarely there is no great need for any organised form of social control, such as courts, where leaders act as judges and mediators, and where each offence has its own specific penalty. The mechanisms of social control on Clare are of a much more diffuse, indirect nature.

Social control is the control applied by the people of a community to protect their values and institutions from attack. Whenever social control operates its purpose is to prevent damage to some institution which is of importance to the community, when such damage would arouse in the members of the community a strong emotional reaction, and a desire to make the anti-social individuals in the community conform to the accepted behaviour patterns. Social control, in fact, exists to protect the values of the society, and it is when

these values are threatened that it is most likely to operate.

The values on Clare centre round home and farm work, religion, kinship, marriage, and the family, and it is to compel the individual to accept and respect these values that mechanisms of social control are exerted.

The chief form of social control whereby individuals are made to conform to the desired behaviour pattern, is the pressure of public opinion, which is expressed through gossip. In addition to this diffuse, unorganised method of control religious sanctions are very occasionally brought to bear on the islanders by the Catholic Church, through its agent, the island priest. The occasions on which the priest feels it necessary to apply religious sanctions are very rare, and he will only do so, in serious cases, as a last resort, since the religious sanction is the final source of authority.

Religious sanctions may take the form of the priest expressing his disapproval of certain individual or collective actions, such as whispering in church, or attempting to evade payment for entry to the weekly dance, from the pulpit on Sunday. Until recent years the practice of "naming" an offender in church was a dreaded punishment used by the priest to shame an offender. When all the community were gathered in the chapel for mass he would stand up in the pulpit and deliver a tirade against anyone was behaving in an anti-social, or improper way, so that the whole community could hear. Now he will not mention an offender by name, but just address a warning in general terms to the whole congregation.

The most recent serious offence which required the interference of the priest was when a man, who had "married in," attacked his wife's old parents with whom he was living, and beat them with a

stick. As a result the priest visited this man to rebuke him. All the neighbours, who had heard about the attack two hours after it had occurred, saw him making his way to the house next day, noticed how long he took to return along the road, and drew their own conclusions as to what he said. One woman, a next-door neighbour, noticed that he did not enter the house to sit down, and perhaps take a cup of tea, but to indicate his displeasure refused to enter, and stood in the doorway to rebuke the offender. It is regarded as extremely shameful to commit an offence so serious that the priest has to come and rebuke you, and the fear, not only of gossip, and public opinion, but, in the last resort, of the disapproval of the Church, acts as a severe deterrent to anti-social action, and results in the need for religious sanctions being very rare.

The islanders have a great fear of being the subject of gossip or jokes, and the fear of being the "Table-talk" of the island makes them, in the main, adhere to conventional behaviour. They are extremely sensitive to public opinion. As one woman said, "You're thinking all the time that everyone's watching you - if they were strangers (instead of islanders) you'd know they wouldn't be watching you and you wouldn't worry." "There're some people on this island with awful long tongues - I know they say a lot about me too."

This sensitivity is so great that there are several women on the island so afraid of being laughed at that if they see anyone laughing in their presence, they imagine themselves to be the cause of the amusement, and become so offended that they will not speak to such a person again.

Because of the small size of the community and the monotony of every day life any occurrence, even slightly out of the ordinary, arouses a great deal of interest and discussion. As one fourteen

year old girl said, "In a backward sort of place like this the people don't see much and they get excited over little things."

"News is important here," said a married man, "because there's no cinema, no cars, nothing ever happens and there is nothing except the village gossip." As Kavanagh¹ observed in "The Green Fool", "The glory of the country is the leisure people have to mind everyone's business."

Though everyone takes an active interest in gossip there is an etiquette about its transmission. It is a general rule that one does not admit to having heard any item of news. Every item of information retailed, however often the listener may have heard it from other sources, is greeted with expressions of interest and incredulity. It is regarded as very bad form to admit that you have already heard a particular piece of gossip, since everyone likes to feel that they are the first to know the facts, and the first to pass them on to their friends. If you admit to having heard the news in question a person will be very offended, and will want to know exactly when you heard it, and from whom, and will feel hurt to be caught retailing second-hand news.

People are always avid for news of the simplest type and the very first question an islander will ask when he meets another on the road is, "Anything strange?" (any news) The arrival of a stranger to the island in the mail boat, for instance, is first perceived by those at the Quay, the innkeeper, boatmen, and the postmen, and whoever else happens to be there shopping. The news of the arrival, and any other news from the mainland, travels with the mail, and within two hours such information as the fact that the baker's wife

1. P. Kavanagh. The Green Fool, London 1938.

in Louisburgh is expecting a cousin from America, or that a man at Accony cut his hand with a scythe, is known from one end of the island to the other, because "News travels fast in Clare Island."

Strangers passing along the road are stared at, discussed, sometimes even followed, and the islanders cannot rest until they have found out their business. Not only are strangers a subject of constant interest and discussion, but everyone takes as much interest in the affairs of his neighbour as he does in his own. He knows how many lambs his neighbour has, how many he sold at the last fair, how much he made from the sale, and how much money he has in the bank in Westport. Children shopping at the Quay will keep their eyes open for every scrap of news and report it in detail to their parents when they return. If cattle or sheep buyers are at the Quay, even the youngest child will remember every detail of the sales, and how much each farmer received for his stock. Very few transactions can be carried out in secret on the island, because even if there are no adults present the children, unobtrusive but ubiquitous, absorb and transmit the news as accurately as a tape recorder.

Though it is recognised that "Everyone knows everyone's business here," and many people resent it, yet they realise that it is inevitable in such a small community. As one woman said, it is ridiculous for people to try and keep their private business secret, and their worries to themselves, "Everyone will know about it anyway so you might just as well tell them and have the comfort of getting it off your mind." Of someone who keeps her troubles to herself another woman says she is too "close" and "...sure isn't it all the same, doesn't everyone know them anyway?"

The intense interest people display in the everyday activities of their neighbours is a factor which helps to inhibit any anti-social

action. If Austy knows that his neighbour Tony is concerned with how many lambs Austy had this year, and knows the exact number, he can be sure that Tony will be even more interested if Austy tries to steal one of his sheep, or to seduce his daughter. Where everyone's slightest action, especially if it is a deviant action, is common knowledge, and where it is virtually impossible to keep any action, social or antisocial, or any fact, from becoming generally known within a few hours of its occurrence, people are naturally cautious in their behaviour, and try to keep to the accepted behaviour pattern, to avoid becoming the subject of unfavourable gossip - as one man complained, when it was rumoured that he was going to ask a certain girl to marry him, "Isn't this a terrible place to live, where everyone knows what you're going to do before you've even thought of doing it?"

People admit that they do not like the tendency to gossip but say that it gets a grip on you - "You never realise how curious you are till you live here and start joining in the gossip," said one returned emigrant.

Gossip and the malicious passing on of unpleasant remarks cause many temporary ructions in the community because of the sensitivity to gossip. Consequently, to avoid this, there is great secrecy in the transmission of even the most trivial bit of information. The women send their children out of the house when they want to retail a choice item of scandal so that they cannot overhear and repeat it. One woman says she cannot speak freely with her father-in-law in the house, because he listens to everything said and carries the news down to the next house, from which it is spread all over the island in a few hours. Even after such precautions have been taken gossip

is always prefaced by such remarks as "Don't pretend (admit) it was me who told it you," or "I wouldn't like to say it to anyone but you, or it would get back to her."

Gossip can cause disagreements between neighbours, and the ill-feeling it creates between them is usually expressed by the establishment of a "avoidance relationship," a situation where the normal standards of behaviour between neighbours cease to operate. J. and P., for instance, are not on speaking terms - they are "not speaking" because someone mentioned to J. that he had heard P. making unflattering remarks about his appearance. J. who is unduly sensitive about his ugliness, took offence and has not spoken to P. for three years.

Two next door neighbours at the Quay, married women who, after a series of petty quarrels, lost their tempers and fought each other, have now not been speaking to each other for twelve years. The length of time during which this silence is maintained varies with the nature of the disagreement, and with the temperament of the people concerned, and may be only of a very short duration. It is, however, more likely to continue for several years, since it is usually the culmination of many years of quarrels and disputes, and is a recognition that the people concerned cannot agree, and are wiser to cease having a relationship with each other. Two men at the west had a quarrel about the ownership of a curragh and would not speak to each other for two years, even though they lived next door, until, one winter day, one of them was in danger of drowning when his curragh capsized in the harbour, and the other plunged into the icy water to rescue him before any other onlookers could pluck up the courage to do so. From then onwards the two neighbours resumed their normal amicable relationship and forgot the dispute.

An example of the way in which gossip can create avoidance

relationships is the case of two friends Nora and Katy, middle-aged, married women, whose mothers were close friends, and who have been on visiting terms with each other since childhood. Mary, a spinster living with her brother and his wife, who is recognised as being somewhat eccentric, or "cracked", went to Nora and told her, quite untruthfully, that Katy had been laughing about Nora and her husband, and spreading stories about them. Nora was extremely offended and when Katy next called to see her she was very rude to her, and did not offer her the usual cup of tea. Katy was so surprised that she asked what was the reason for this, and when Nora told her she was so angry that such a close friend could believe this untrue gossip, especially from a person as "cracked" as Mary, that she left the house at once. She has broken off the friendship and no longer visits Nora. She swears that she will never set foot in Nora's house again, "I wouldn't think anything of myself if I did - I'd be ashamed of myself." Katy's husband does not speak to Mary, or her brother now, or visit them, though they are his first cousins, because he is so angry with Mary for her behaviour, and he has told Katy to do the same. Katy is extremely upset over the loss of her friend and the incident has hurt her.

To cease visiting someone, as Katy and her husband have done, someone with whom one was formerly on friendly terms, is a sign of extreme displeasure, and to do so, or even to refuse to speak to a person, is a form of social control used on Clare to counteract what is considered to be anti-social behaviour.

The fear of becoming a subject of gossip and of exposing oneself to public opinion acts as a check on undesirable behaviour. For instance, as one woman said, "Here if any girl has a "misfortune" everyone down to little Billy (aged four and living at the farthest

west) would know about it." Everyone knows the history of every person on the island, and that of his whole family, past and present, and this alone is a mechanism of social control, since a person who is known to have some undesirable characteristic, or is expected, because of the behaviour of his antecedents, to possess it, will try to keep it in check. An instance of the way in which public opinion operates to prevent undesirable behaviour was the casual flirtation, a man of forty started, with a girl twenty years his junior. As soon as it became generally known that he was taking an interest in the girl he stopped doing so, since he had no intention of marrying her and did not want to be forced by public opinion into a situation where he would be expected to do so.

The fear of public opinion leads to many people, who would probably not otherwise do so, conforming to the desired patterns of behaviour, for fear of arousing unfavourable comment.

One of the most important values on the island is that placed on hospitality. An unpopular woman will still be praised if she is hospitable, "She's very good in the house, very clean, and she'll always give you a nice cup of tea, I will say that for her."

People take a great pride in setting a "good table", in being lavish and generous with what food they have, and people who are mean and reluctant to give visitors a cup of tea are regarded with contempt. One woman refuses to give her sister-in-law help in getting turf because she so disapproves of her meanness in this respect. One man even went so far as to say that he would not mind what sort of moral failings any of his family or ancestors might have, "But I wouldn't like to have any mean gent among them."

However unfavourably lack of hospitality is regarded at normal times the lack of it at such an important celebration as the "stations"

is regarded as extremely contemptible. People who are too mean, or too lazy to give the breakfast after the "station," or to hold the "station dance" run the risk of being ridiculed, and it is with many people a matter of pride to hold the "station" in the house rather than send it to the chapel, in spite of the amount of work and expense involved, to avoid being considered mean. One man, who is universally disliked because of his lack of hospitality, is wealthy enough to hold a dance and has plenty of female help in the house, yet will never hold a station dance in his house, nor will he welcome visitors.

"It's a house where nobody goes in. They don't like to have people visiting them." "They've never had a wedding, a christening, a dance, or even a wake at that house - everybody does be giving out to them about it."

To show their disapproval of his behaviour people have started to exclude him from their own dances. In this way, by depriving him of the pleasure of attending other dances, and by making him aware that his behaviour is despised, the rest of the community bring pressure to bear on him, attempting to make him conform to the normal standards of behaviour.

One woman, holding a station dance, had gone to great trouble to make a nice tea and to make everything pleasant for her guests, when the lamp in the room where the tea was to be served, went out. Having no spare lamp she had to borrow one from her neighbours and "felt ashamed," at having to do so. In her confusion, while she was lighting the second lamp, she set a cushion on fire. Some of the guests laughed, and she lost her temper, which made them laugh all the more, until in a rage, she ordered them all to leave the house, before she had even given them their tea. They did so at once, but the shame she felt then at her breach of hospitality and her failure as a hostess still haunts

her, and the incident is still held against her though it took place several years ago. People say that she will never hold another station dance in her house again, because of it.

The way in which people are made to feel aware that they have been guilty of inhospitable behaviour in an indirect way is shown by another incident that occurred at a station dance. This dance was held by a bachelor of forty and his aged parents, the bachelor acting as the host, since his father was too old to do so. Instead of standing at the door to greet each guest with a handshake on their arrival, as is the custom at station dances, the host, having ensured beforehand that there was enough food, and that the women of the village were able to prepare the tea for his guests, retired to his bedroom to listen to the wireless, instead of welcoming his guests, and looking after them as befitted his role as host. The guests regarded this behaviour as extremely rude, since it made them feel unwelcome, in spite of the efforts made by the old parents to cover up their son's deficiency as a host. The son himself did not, he admitted later to me, fully realise how inhospitable he had been, until he heard a man who had not even been at the dance, but who had heard about it from those who had, discussing his scandalously impolite behaviour and joking about it with a group of other men in the pub. He then became uncomfortably aware that he had committed a serious breach of hospitality.

A similar occasion on which public opinion operated as a means of indicating to a man that he had deviated from the desired form of behaviour, was when a man flouted the mourning conventions by going to a dance after receiving the news of the death of his aunt, on the mainland, that very afternoon. He was regarded as showing a great lack of respect for the dead, as he should not have attended a dance for at least six months after the death of such a close relative, and

still less should he have taken an active part in the dancing, which he did. To shame him publicly for flouting the mourning conventions people kept coming up to him when he was dancing, to interrupt him with serious faces, shaking him by the hand, commiserating with him on his sad loss, and saying how very miserable he must be feeling.

In "People of the Sierra," Pitt-Rivers¹ observes that in the Spanish village which he is studying, "Public opinion is partly expressed anonymously by the insulting nickname and by communally sung songs at festivals, or, in cases of sexual brazenness, by the rowdy ridicule of nocturnal visitors, who assemble outside the victim's house." It is interesting to note that both the insulting nickname and the nocturnal visits, though not necessarily for sexual brazenness, are also present on Clare Island, and are used as mechanisms for expressing disapproval of anti-social, or aberrant behaviour.

Nicknames are frequently used to describe the appearance of the individual - Little Austy, Big Austy, Red John, Larry the Rat (so called because of his shifty appearance), Four eyes (spectacles), Old Hat, Whiskers, The Fairies, The Jug (so called after the huge bole of the pipe he is continually smoking). They may be used to refer to certain peculiarities of speech or character - "The Spitter", so called because of his habit of spitting, "The Speaker" for his propensity to make speeches at every available opportunity, "The Baker," because of his skill in baking and the pride he takes in doing so, "Well, 'Damn yer soul," "John Begorrah" "I declare to God", all referring to peculiarities of speech, "Curious," "Cobbler" and "Ronnie Delaney" (referring to the speed with which he runs.)

Nicknames are also used to express dislike of certain qualities. A woman who gossips too much and too indiscreetly, and who always knows about everything before anyone else, is called "Fortune Teller".

1. J. Pitt-Rivers. Op. cit.

Any form of ostentation or showing off is regarded with contempt, and one woman who always prides herself on being ahead of other women in matters of fashion is called "Mary Ann Tan Shoes", because she was the first woman on the island to buy a pair of tan shoes, instead of the black ones which had always been worn by the women until then. A man who had a great reputation for flirting with women, even after he was married, was known as "Stallion", while two men with very strong religious tendencies were known as "Rasputin" and "The Monk". "Proud Austin," "Squire", and "Costello" were the names given to men who were exceptionally conceited, and held themselves aloof from the rest of the community.

People are extremely sensitive about their nicknames and are always perfectly well aware of what they are called behind their backs by the rest of the community. Under no circumstances, however, would an islander address another to his face by his nickname - to do so would be regarded as an unforgivable insult. The fact that people are aware that their faults, or peculiarities, have given rise to nicknames, and in some cases to a considerable amount of ridicule and amusement, acts as a means of control, since they are reluctant to expose themselves to ridicule by acquiring a nickname, and will do their best to avoid creating an unfavourable, or ridiculous, impression on the rest of the community, when they realise that to create such an impression might lead to their being branded for the rest of their life with an insulting nickname.

I could only discover two recent occasions on which nocturnal visits were used as a means of attempting to compel anti-social individuals to conform to the accepted standards of behaviour.

The first occasion was that on which the "Stallion", who knew about the nickname he had been given, and the reason for which it had

been given, was acutely sensitive about it, and resented it strongly, held a "station" dance in his house. Because he had been indulging in his usual pastime, of flirting with any woman with whom he came into contact, during the dance some of the younger men climbed on to the roof of the house, and lowered a sieve of oats, the kind of lure used to catch a horse, from the roof, dangling it from a string outside the window of the room in which he happened to be, the room next to that in which the dancing was going on. They drew his attention to the sieve by shaking it until the oats rattled. When he noticed it he was so enraged, because he immediately recognised that it was a reference to his nickname, and an oblique reference to his undesirable activities, that he dashed into the room where the dancing was going on and in his fury, ordered all the guests to leave the house at once.

Great importance is attached to the quality of being "a good neighbour", kind, obliging and willing to help one's neighbours whenever they need assistance of any kind. One seventy year old man, very mean, and even lazier than he was mean, had been guilty of unneighbourly behaviour, and had so annoyed the people of his village by making too many demands on them and refusing to reciprocate in any way, that they decided to show their disapproval. One night a small group of young people collected at his gate and shouted insults at him, "Fine neighbour you are!" and so on, until he came stumbling out of his house in the dark and started cursing him, when they threw cabbage stalks and other pieces of rubbish at him to show their disapproval.

It is very rarely that the islanders take such collective action against an offender. They prefer in the main, either to settle individual disputes privately and with the minimum of disturbance, without recourse to interference by a third party, or to rely on maintaining the desired patterns of behaviour through the force of public

opinion.

Public opinion expressed through gossip, is a diffuse and unorganised method of social control, which in Clare, a society acutely aware of the importance of public opinion, proves very effective. People are reluctant to criticise or complain about a man to his face. They prefer to convey their feelings to him indirectly by making his behaviour the subject of general gossip, or merely to vent their resentment by discussing his behaviour with a few friends rather than confronting him directly. This habit of complaining to friends rather than to the person concerned is a valuable safety valve which frequently prevents open hostility. It is also a means whereby control can be exercised over people, all acutely sensitive to being the subject of gossip, without causing offence, because of its indirect effect. A man is not publicly reprimanded. He merely gets to hear, often in a joking way (as with the inhospitable bachelor at the station dance), certainly in an indirect way, what is the general opinion of his behaviour. The way in which the islanders exercise control, in general, is by a sort of indirect ridicule.

The social control mechanism of gossip makes known to the offender the general opinion of the community about his behaviour and forces him, if he wishes to retain the respect of his fellow islanders, to conform to the accepted standards of behaviour.

My purpose in this section of the thesis has been to describe the social organisation of the islanders, and to relate this to the historical, social and economic background described in the earlier part of the thesis.

The decline in the incidence of marriages, the decrease in the size of the island families, continual emigration, the dissatisfied

attitude of many of the islanders, especially the women, to the decline of the island, and the way in which the women are reluctant to marry and settle on the island, are indications that the island culture is gradually dying out.

The islanders are aware of this. That they refuse to accept it as a reality, it is my intention to show in the final part of the thesis, where the reaction of the islanders to the threat of extinction, which, I postulate, can be regarded as a "nativistic movement," will be examined. The nativistic movement has four main features, the interest taken in religious activities, and the emphasis on ritual, especially in connection with the "stations", the determination to maintain all possible opportunities for social interaction, the increase in cooperation between neighbours, and the relaxation, when necessary, of the traditional division of labour.

CHAPTER 13

THE ISLANDERS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In both their attitude to the past and their attitude to the present the islanders show a tendency towards contradiction. They are ready to praise certain aspects of the past, and to accept some aspects of the present, but at the same time they are equally ready to condemn and reject certain elements of both the past and present way of life. Towards the present especially their attitude is not simply one of acceptance, but rather of selection and rejection.

The islanders tend to glorify certain aspects of the past, notably the social life, and the personalities of bygone islanders. Their nostalgic longing for the old way of life at the end of the nineteenth century is, however, coupled with a certain degree of embarrassment over the superstitions and the belief in ghosts, relics of this era, which still linger on in spite of determined efforts on the part of the majority of the islanders to eradicate them.

The equivocal attitude to the past held by the islanders is shown by the way in which they regard their traditional history, the legend which can be considered as the Clare Island "myth of origin," with a feeling that is a mixture of ridicule and pride.

The Clare Islanders are not concerned with tracing back their history to earliest times. They admit, if questioned, to a belief that the island was probably inhabited many hundreds of years before the abbey was built in 1224, but for them the historical tradition of the island is embodied in the castle, the square, sixteenth century fortress that stands at the edge of the harbour, guarding the entrance to the island. This is reputed to be the home of Granuaile O'Malley (Maille) the pirate queen of the west, from whom many of the

islanders believe themselves to be descended.

Granuaile was a notable figure in the sixteenth century, and stories of her exploits linger on in the western counties, especially in Mayo, where she lived, from which she organised raids on the English fleets, and where she built, or is reputed to have built, castles along its coasts, in which she established garrisons to defend her territory against raiders. She was the chieftainess of the O'Malley clan, and it was believed to be on Clare Island that she made her headquarters.

It was chiefly through her attacks on Queen Elizabeth's fleet, and her support of the Spanish Armada that Granuaile became famous. The first mention made of Granuaile in history occurred in 1578,¹ when she was referred to as a "notorious offender." A few months later when Lord Justice Drury² went to Munster and spent a few days in Leighlin punishing offenders he wrote, "To that place was brought unto me Granie ny Maille, a woman of the province of Connaught..... famous for her stoutness of courage and person, and for sundry exploits done by her by sea. She was taken by the Earl of Desmond a year and a half ago and has remained ever since, partly with him and partly in her Majesty's goal of Limerick, and was sent for now by me to come to Dublin where she is yet remaining."

In 1583 Sir H. Sidney³ wrote that when he arrived in Galway, "There came to me also a most famous feminine sea captain called Grany I Mallie, and offered her service unto me, wheresoever I would command her, with three galleys and two hundred fighting men, either

1. The Carew MSS. II 1578, Number 109.

2. Ibid.

3. State Papers of Ireland. Queen Elizabeth I, 1583.

in England or Scotland; she brought with her her husband, for she was as well by sea as by land more than Mrs. Mate with him; he was of the Nether Burkes and now as I hear ... called by nickname Richard - in-Iron. This was a notorious woman in all the coasts of Ireland."

Again in the State Papers a few years later it was mentioned "That there was a great assembly of the nobility ... among whom Greny O'Malley is one, and thinketh herself to be no small lady."

In the 1590s mention is made of the arrest of Granuaile's sons and brother, and of her journey to England where she visited the court of Queen Elizabeth to request their release, and asked Elizabeth to grant her sons succession to their father's land, and permission for them to surrender their lands and to receive them back by grant under letters patent, and asked for maintenance for herself. Elizabeth acceded to her requests and Granuaile agreed to hold her land from the Queen. The Queen¹, writing a letter to Sir Richard Bingham, asking him to release Granuaile's sons and to carry out her other requests, says that, "Grace promises to continue most dutiful", and to abandon her attempts to attack and defeat the English at sea.

Granuaile's connection with Clare Island has always been a considerable source of pride to the islanders, partly, no doubt, because she was admired for her defiance of the English, this admiration being intensified during the Famine years when the islanders suffered from the oppression of landlords appointed by the British Government, and when Granuaile's actions seemed even more admirable than before, and partly because of the legendary exploits that have been attributed to her.

In 1839 Caesar Otway reports that on visiting the abbey he was shown a skull, in which a pair of gold earrings were inserted, said

1. Historical Manuscripts Commission. Calendar Manuscript of the Marquis of Salisbury. Part IV, p. 368.

to be that of Granuaile, "I observed it with reverence, such as was evidently expected from us all by the people." This skull has since disappeared and is no longer mentioned by the islanders.

Many of the islanders, when asked about Granuaile and her connection with the island, tend to belittle the matter, saying that she is not buried on the island, in the abbey, as tradition has held her to be, and that none of the islanders can claim direct descent from her, dismissing the whole legend as a "lot of nonsense." Many, especially those who do not bear her surname, disclaim all knowledge of her, "We're not O'Malleys - if we were we might know a bit about it."

On the other hand there is still a strong belief among many islanders, especially those who bear the surname of O'Malley, that they are descendants of the O'Malleys who occupied the island in the sixteenth century, if not of Granuaile herself, then of her close kin, and such people maintain that Granuaile was brought back to her island home when she was dying, for burial in the abbey, where her bones still remain today.

The O'Malleys of the western counties have formed a clan, to which several of the island O'Malleys belong, and whose annual meetings, held to celebrate the link between the present day O'Malleys, and their ancestress, Granuaile, they attend. This rally, though regarded as of considerable importance by a few of the islanders, is regarded by the majority, including some O'Malleys themselves, as a waste of time. "Just because people have the same name as you have it doesn't mean you'd be interested in meeting them," (O'Malley) "If the rally was held at the end of that field of barley (20 yards away) I wouldn't go to it," (O'Malley) "It'd be different if they were celebrating something, but they're not. Even if they are descended from Granuaile itself who was she? Just an old sea robber and a pirate." (Burns)

On the four hundredth anniversary of Granuaile's death members of the O'Malley clan, the clan chief (elected annually) from Westport, and other notable clan members, including university men, from the western counties, came to the island to make a pilgrimage to Granuaile's grave in the abbey, and to lay a wreath on it. Those who were not O'Malleys took no interest at all in their arrival, and no part in their procession to the abbey, on which they were accompanied by only one or two of the island members of the clan. Many expressed the view that it was "a lot of foolishness," and if there was one thing they hated it was, "People encouraging that sort of nonsense." When the visitors stopped at the inn on the way home, few of the islanders spoke to them, ignoring their presence at the bar completely. Those who did speak did so only to deny the belief that Granuaile was buried in the abbey at all, "We've always heard that if she's buried anywhere she's buried under the floor of this pub," one man teased the visitors, and when a visitor offered drinks to the islanders they all refused, in the most impolite way possible, to show their contempt of the purpose of the visit to the island. They regarded their rudeness to the visitors as a great joke and spent several days afterwards recounting how they had snubbed them.

In spite of this professed indifference to Granuaile, which can at times turn to overt ridicule of the legend of descent from her, and of those who believe in it, there is a considerable covert pride taken in her exploits and in her association with the island. After four hundred years she is still a frequent topic for discussion in the island homes, and especially in the inn, where the men often relate incidents attributed to her, ponder over the fate of one of her lesser-known sons, discussing whether he settled on the island, and is an ancestor of some branch of a particular island family, and in general

show a lively interest in everything relating to her life.

An indication of the islanders' attitude towards their "myth of origin," insofar as Granuaile is regarded as the ancestress of many of them, is provided by their attitude to the self-styled island Chief, Ned O'Malley, who claims direct descent from Granuaile and whose role will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Island Attitude Towards the Supernatural

It is probably in regard to superstitions that the islanders' attitude is most contradictory. The overt attitude towards ghosts, fairies, and the old superstitions, is one of ridicule and scorn, but in many cases this is accompanied by an equally strong covert belief in the reality of such superstitions.

The islanders do not have any particular feeling that when the old parents retire from active life they should move into the "west room", the room at the west of the house, because it is this room, with its close association with the fairies and with the ancestors, portrayed in the photos in the west room, and with the setting sun, that provides a fitting place for their decline and eventual death.¹ In nine cases in which the old couple and the young couple are living in the same house there was no general rule about which room the old couple should occupy. In six cases they occupied the room on the right of the kitchen and in three cases that on the left.

There is however a feeling, denied by most of the islanders, but admitted by some, that the fairies are associated with the western end of the house, and that it is very unlucky to build an addition on to this end, or even to enlarge the room. To do so is believed to be an offence against the fairies which will only result in

1. C. Arensberg and S. Kimball, op. cit.

catastrophe for the offenders. One man, in spite of this superstition, built another room on to the western end of the house, but he did so with great trepidation, because a man in the next village, having enlarged his western room, died shortly afterwards, because, the islanders believed, he had angered the fairies by doing so. Similarly it is regarded as inviting catastrophe to build a house on the site of what is believed to be a fairy fortress. The fairies, a lesser sort of fallen angel, are believed to live in the tufty mounds which cover certain grassy hillsides, and their fortresses are the dark green "fairy rings". A story is told of a family who built their house on the site of a fairy fortress in spite of the warning of a "Seanachie" (story teller), who said that the family would be destroyed if they offended the fairies by building on this site. The two brothers and two sisters in the house all died before they reached fifty, insane or unmarried, and this was believed to be the vengeance of the fairies. Even though this occurred more than twenty years ago children are still afraid to pass the ruins of this house at night.

A girl of fourteen, talking about the old superstitions, such as tying a red ribbon round the tail of a cow before it calved to ensure an easy delivery, said, "The old people on this island had the awfulest minds - they were awful suspicious - they used to be very innocent (unsophisticated) but it's not like that now." This professed attitude, that all the old peoples' stories about ghosts, fairies and other supernatural manifestations were just nonsense, is very widespread.

Islanders say that even as recently as thirty years ago people used to be terrified of ghosts, "You'd be afraid of your life just

to step outside the door at night, in case you met something." One sixty year old woman told me of how the old people used to gather round the fire to tell stories about ghosts, and how the children used to huddle in the corner of the kitchen, listening, terrified that they might be sent outside to fetch a few sods of turf, and how they would creep trembling to bed, hiding their heads under the blankets in terror, imagining ghosts everywhere. One forty year old man says, "Of course that's all foolishness - there's none of that here now, it's all nonsense, there's no such thing as ghosts." Yet in spite of this, his wife, who joined with him in expressing her disbelief in ghosts, was afraid, a few nights later, to walk from one village to another in the dark, and admitted that she was afraid of meeting ghosts if she was out alone at night. Many women and children are afraid of the darkness because they feel that they may meet the ghosts of dead people. One woman refused to walk home alone from a neighbour's house after hearing that William, an old man living nearby, had just died, "Suppose I met William (i.e. his ghost) on the road?" she said in horror. Another said of a widow, who lived alone in her house after the death of her husband, "If I was her I'd be afraid of my life in case I'd see him."

They are also afraid of meeting fairies, who are supposed to kidnap attractive young boys and girls, who, once taken by the fairies, are never seen again.

One belief that is still very strong, and is rarely ridiculed, is that in the "banshee," who is believed to be a small little woman, about eighteen inches high, dressed all in white, who cries at the death of members of certain families. Many people claim to have heard the wailing of the banshee on the night when a death has occurred in these families and it is a sound that people dread to hear.

TAKING THE WRACK TO THE MEADOWS.



This farmer carries the wet wrack from the strand straight to his fields. His neighbour prefers to spread it out to dry (on the right of the picture) before transporting it to his fields.

Wrack has been used on Clare Island as manure for many hundreds of years. Before the introduction of horses to the island the seaweed was collected from the sea by the women, who carried it in baskets on their backs to the fields.

Two men, walking back to their homes in the hillside village of Strake, on a black night, in a dense fog, were startled by a wild shrieking and sobbing which they recognised as the banshee. Next day they heard that an islander, who had lost his way in the fog had walked over the cliffs to his death on the rocks seven hundred feet below. When an old man at the north died last year, a group of northern men returning home after an evening at the pub, unaware of the death, heard a woman crying by the roadside, but thinking it was just an old woman who lived nearby they took no notice, until they arrived at the house of death to find that particular old woman had been there all the time. They then realised that what they heard must have been the banshee.

The Decline of the Social Life

There is a strong feeling that the life of the island has declined and deteriorated in the past thirty or forty years, accompanied by a tendency to glorify the past way of life and to idealise certain aspects of it. People say that islanders used to be bigger and stronger and capable of much greater endurance in the old days. They say that the women worked in the fields like men, and used to climb down the cliff face and wade into the sea, "up to their axters" (armpits) collecting the red wrack for manure, whereas the women of today could not even climb down the cliffs, let alone collect the wrack and climb up again with loads on their backs. Everyone went barefoot in all weathers, climbing the snow covered hills in winter after lambs in their "pure feet", whereas it would kill the people of today to have to do this.

One man of eighty has great admiration for the men who were old

when he was a boy; they were, "like animals," huge, big and powerful, "like elephants." They could fast for forty eight hours on end if need be, and all they ate was potatoes and buttermilk, whereas "We have our dinner at two o'clock and we're starved again around five - people now couldn't fast for more than three hours, and they'd think that was a lot." He recalls how they used to get up in the morning to go mackerel fishing, leaving the house without even kindling the fire to make a cup of tea, and be out all day until evening without eating, just smoking or chewing tobacco.

Stories are told of the exploits of men in the old days, the way they used to hunt seals in the caves under the western cliffs, and how they would brave mountainous seas in the winter in frail currachs to save a sick person's life by rowing them to the mainland. They regret the passing of all the old people, the story tellers, the singers and dancers, and the witty talkers, and frequently say that there are no people left today who can compare with the fine old characters who have died in the last thirty years, bemoaning the lack of individualists, people with personality. "The people here now are nothing like the ones that used to be here." "The young ones now are no good at all - all they can talk about is football - and they won't talk at all often except to say yes or no."

They complain about the dances, saying that in the old days all the older people used to dance instead of leaving the floor almost entirely to those under thirty as they do today. "The old people kept much better time in the sets than the young ones - they were much better dancers."

Charles Brown¹ reports the same attitude on Inishturk as long ago

1. Charles Browne. Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. 1893.

as the 1890s. "Many of the older men state that emigration has taken away the finest men from the islands, and say that formerly the stature of the men was greater than it is now." The general attitude is that the people of today and the island life today is colourless and monotonous compared to that of thirty years or more ago.

The Place of the Aged on the Island.

The attitude to the past is probably most clearly manifested in any society by the behaviour shown towards the aged who are, for the younger people of the society, the representatives and the embodiment of the past.

The criterion of age on the island is whether or not a man or woman is eligible for the old age pension, which cannot be drawn until the age of seventy. Until a person is of pensionable age he or she is not regarded as old.

Because of their belief in religion the islanders have none of the dread of dying that makes the thought of growing old painful. The only fear that the ageing islander has is that he will become, through age or infirmity, a burden to his family, incapable of leading a useful life for the last few years of his existence.

The shortage of male labour on the island means that a great deal of the work on the farm must necessarily be carried out by men of sixty or more, and while they are fit enough to carry out their normal activities, the old can never be said to retire from active life. The old people, especially the men, are very reluctant to give up responsibility for the management of the farm, since to do so is to admit that they are growing old. The young islanders say that when people grow old they get "daft for work" and they say this tendency to want to do more than one is capable of on the farm is a

sign of growing old.

Even when a man has handed over the responsibility of running the farm to his son he is usually unwilling to retire from active life. With the exception of two invalids, all the men over seventy on the island, even those crippled with rheumatism, do as much work as they can on the farm, in good or bath weather, working alongside their sons in the fields. One old man is so crippled with rheumatism that he has to hobble to the potato field on two sticks, and when he arrives, using the spade as a support, he does as much work as his son. A man of eighty travels several miles to the bog to fetch turf every day, while another, who is too weak to do any work in the fields, helps his son by keeping watch over the cattle, and fetching them when it is time for milking.

The younger people have a great admiration for the old, especially for those who continue to work, rather than become a burden to their families, even when they are no longer really capable of working. As one fifty year old man expressed it, "The old people on this island are great - they're well able to look after themselves - they're not a bit childish," (senile).

In spite of this admiration for the old and active, those who, because of extreme age or illness, are no longer useful members of the community, and are a burden to their children, are still treated with deference and affection.

When visiting, for instance, people will always take great care to greet the aged person of the house, even though they may be blind, deaf, or "childish!" They listen to their stories with interest, and encourage them to take an active part in the conversation, frequently asking their opinions, or, when referring to some incident that happened in the past, asking for confirmation of some point.

An instance of the respect and affection which is shown to the aged was the treatment accorded to A. when his daughters held a dance in the house. A. is old and very feeble, and has been confined to the house for many years. He is also deaf. During the dance he occupied the most comfortable seat near the fire throughout the evening. Many of the guests had not seen him for several years, since they were not in the habit of visiting the house, and they came up to him, shook him by the hand and shouted a few words to him. The middle aged men took turns to sit beside him and keep him company, so that he would not feel neglected. He once had a fine voice and was pressed to sing. After a great deal of persuasion he eventually consented to do so, and was listened to appreciatively. He received much more applause than any of the younger singers, people insisting that his voice was as fine as ever, though it was merely a feeble croak.

The treatment accorded to this old man, the praise given to families who treat their "old one" well, and the universal condemnation of those who do not, shows the importance that is attached to treating the aged with consideration and respect.

There is no differentiation made between the treatment of the useful and active aged and the aged who need a great deal of care and attention and are incapable of any work. This is because they are respected not so much because of their present state, but because of their past achievements. One old woman, now "childish" and bed-ridden, is frequently praised because, "she was a great woman when she was young," and an old man who has become a considerable burden to his family is respected by them and by the rest of the community because of the way in which he used to row out to the mainland in all weathers to fetch the mail in a curragh, before the introduction of

motor boats.

Age in itself is not regarded as an all-excusing virtue. Though the island maxim, "age demands respect," indicates that a man is accorded more respect when he is old than he could expect when he was young, the degree of respect he will be accorded varies with his character and personality. If a man did not command respect when he was younger, when he is old he will be regarded with a certain amount of respect simply because he is old, but he also may run the risk of having stories and jokes told about him, especially about his greed, his laziness, or his conceit. The older an islander grows the more his personal characteristics, good or bad, seem to impress themselves on the minds of the rest of the community, and condition their attitude towards him.

Though the opinions of the aged influence the behaviour of the younger islanders to a certain extent, there is no formal mechanism through which this influence can be exerted. There is no form of old men's council, at which the old men of the community gather together to express their views, to deal with disputes, to make rulings, or to discuss problems affecting the community, and the islanders say that there never has been.

The opinions held by the old men tend to be conveyed informally to the younger ones at the discussions in the churchyard after mass on Sunday mornings, at the pub, and in visiting houses in the winter, where the older men occupy the best seats near the fire, and take the major part in the conversation while the younger men are content to stand round the walls, further away from the fire, and to listen to the conversation. The young boys in their teens, especially, will rarely dare to say a word as a contribution to the general conversation at such a gathering, and will remain silent, except for an occasional

whispered comment to a friend. The young boys too, will not join in the card games that the older men play in the winter at the two chief visiting houses, but will look on while the older men play. If they want to play themselves they will gather in one of the other visiting houses, which, because it is occupied by a large family, consisting of young children, tends to be frequented more by the younger men, contemporaries of the sons of the house.

The old men on the island make no attempt to assert their authority over the young and there is a complete absence of any formal mechanism by which they can exert their influence. Any influence that the old exert is due entirely to the respect they are accorded as individuals, and to the respect to which their age entitles them, and not to any formal institutions.

The islanders' attitude to the past tends to be contradictory in that certain aspects of it such as superstitions, are regarded with disfavour, but the treatment of the aged is probably the best indication of the attitude, a feeling of nostalgia for what are regarded as better days, and a respect for the old traditions.

In their attitude towards the present and the future there is a greater sense of conflict. The conflict is not so much between those who oppose progress and innovations and cling tenaciously to the old way of life, and those who attempt to improve the standards of living on the island, as between those who have chosen to stay on the island, or once having emigrated, returned from choice, and those who have been prevented from leaving the island, or forced to return to it, by kinship obligations.

It is a significant fact that on Clare it is the women who are more anxious to emigrate, and, once having emigrated, more reluctant to return to the island. This reluctance on the part of the women

of a community to marry and settle in the community is one of the characteristics of a dying society, and it is shown very clearly on Clare Island.

Investigations showed that, of the 61 people who returned to the island, after spending periods ranging from 1-14 years in the United States or Britain, only 21 women returned, as opposed to 40 men, many of these women returning, not from choice, but to fulfil kinship obligations, by looking after their old parents or bachelor brothers. The fact that twice as many men as women returned is a clear indication that the men have a greater preference for life on the island than have the women. In addition, many women who have never left the island have been prevented from marrying or emigrating by kinship obligations and bitterly regret it.

It is consequently chiefly from the men that one hears the island praised. The majority of the islandmen have a great love for the island, and a mainlander living at Accony said that it is amusing to watch them, weatherbound after a fair, pacing up and down, waiting for the sea to calm, and saying, "I wish I could get back to my lovely island."

The men are very sensitive to the beauty of the island scenery, the cliffs and the sunsets. "You miss the hills when you aren't on the island," one man complained after a visit to his brother in N. Ireland. An eighty year old man praised the beauty of the island, "The scenery of nature, not any of that built up stuff." A busy farmer, with very little spare time, likes to spend what leisure he has standing by the sea, watching it. "Although we're born and reared by it, and we're used to it, still it calls us back," he explained.

The returned emigrants say that life is much better on the island than in a city. The scenery is much more beautiful than anything you

could see in a city, and the sight of it makes up for the lack of recreation, the only drawback to island life. One boy of 24 went so far as to say, "Life's just one long holiday here," to which his aunt added sourly, "Why wouldn't it be for him? He never gets up before one o'clock!"

The affection that the men feel for the island is shown especially by the attitude of returned emigrants, men who have spent several years overseas, and who have proved their attachment to the island by giving up the advantages of civilised life in order to return there. They give various reasons for their return, the chief one being the feeling of independence gained by the possession of one's own land, and the freedom from keeping to a rigid timetable, as they have to do when working overseas. One bachelor of 45, who has worked in England for several years and returned to the island to live with his bachelor brother, admitted that life on the island was hard, "But you're your own boss, free to do as you like, and I'm thinking for one that's born and reared here they wouldn't want to live anywhere else. In England you're not your own boss - you're afraid of losing your job, you may have a nasty landlady, and you are miserable."

Another bachelor of 40, who worked for a year in Coventry expressed similar views. He said that, though he gave up all the benefits of civilisation to return to Clare Island (to look after his old parents) one of the greatest pleasures and comforts of island life is the feeling that he gets when he can look out at his own land, pick up a handful of it and say, "This is all mine." This feeling of security that the men gain through the ownership of their land, and the attachment that they feel for their own birthplace probably accounts to a great extent for the return of many of the men to the

island.

Women as a rule cannot inherit the land, and they do not feel the same attachment to it as the men, consequently they are less anxious to return to the island. A woman's life, too, is more restricted and monotonous than that of a man, and she has fewer opportunities for social interaction (see Chapter 15) and this may also account for the reluctance of women to return, and for the resentment of many who have been compelled to stay. It is the women from whom one most frequently hears complaints. One woman, a mainlander from County Mayo, who met and married her island husband when they were working in Cleveland, Ohio, and who accompanied him on his return to the island, when his parents recalled him to inherit the family farm, summed up the attitude of the majority of the other women when she said to me, "They had a hard life here long ago, but sure we're living long ago here still. I was very happy in Cleveland - I'd love to go back there again - I don't like it here at all - it's an awful place - it's just like being in prison - I hate it."

Another woman, who has a large family of young children, and very rarely can afford to visit the mainland, complained, "The people who live here don't get a holiday at all - they're stuck with their noses in the mud - you can't expect them to stay here with nothing to look at but the asses's ears."

Other opinions expressed by women which indicated the general feeling of discontent with the way of life are shown by the following remarks made to me during the course of my stay.

"This island is the last place God made - it's alright in the summer but in winter it's fierce - you'll be glad to get out of this

hole of an island," (a spinster of 60, who has spent all her life looking after her widowed brother's children.)

"It's the same thing, day in, day out - there's never anything to do - and no one to talk to - I dread Sunday - it's the worst day of the lot - unless I die young I won't die on this island!" (A married woman of 55, returned from 9 years working in Dublin, and six months in Chicago)

"There's nothing to look forward to here. I often feel sorry for the young ones now - there used to be three or four in each house all visiting each other - all the life's gone out of this place now." (A spinster of 45 who remained to look after her old father, and who is living alone, since his death.)

"It's a lovely place all right if you don't have to spend your whole life in it." "You wouldn't settle down and marry here yourself." "You wouldn't want to live in it - wait till you've seen the winter." "The winter is a dead loss altogether and the summer isn't much better - you meet the same old faces, never a change, week after week, you know them all." (Bachelor of 50.)

This attitude of discontent, on the part of the women especially, has influenced the younger islanders. Even the young ones who have never left the island echo their elders' opinions. "It would seem a very backward place to Yanks," (girl of 17) "This island is a terrible place to live - I don't care what anyone says." (girl of 16) "This island is awful backward - they know nothing here - all the young people now are leaving the island - they won't stay in it - they're right. It's all right for a month or so - I don't know how you've stuck it so long." (girl of 14).

In spite of the frequent complaints on the part of the women and occasionally on the part of the men, the discontent is, I think, much

less deeply rooted than it appears to be. One woman, who never ceased to grumble bitterly about being compelled to stay on the island admitted, "In spite of all I say about this place it has some sort of a grip on me all the same," and this is probably typical of the attitude of many of those who complain about the hardships of island life.

The general opinion is that life on the island would be tolerable if it were not for the occasional shortage of food supplies, the lack of shops and the difficulties of communication with the mainland, and for the constant struggle against the weather and against poor soil. The islanders complain that there is no security on an island farm, because of the small areas of good land, and the lack of sufficient rich grazing for a large number of stock. They are bitter because hard work so frequently counts for nothing. After a period of stormy weather in June, when rain, sea water and wind, had weakened and blackened the newly grown potato plants, growing near the sea, one man, who had suffered exceptionally heavy damage to his crops, after inspecting the damage, said in despair, "That's all my year's work for nothing - I think I'll pack up and get out of here."

They complain that, "Life is hard in these backward places, where all the farm work must be done with a spade. "Everything here is behind the times and everything has to be done the slow way. It's an awful way for people to have to live in the twentieth century, a thousand years behind the times," one man complained, when he had to waste several days, during which he could have been earning money lobster-fishing, digging his potato fields with a spade, because his land was too stony for a plough.

In spite of this the islanders sympathise with the refusal of the Inishturk people to abandon their island homes and accept the offer of the Mayo County Council to provide them with mainland farms

in the vicinity of Louisburgh. "Aren't they just as well where they are?" they asked, and there is little doubt that, if a similar offer were made to them, they would refuse it as the Inishturk people did. As one islandman, a bachelor of sixty, who worked for six years as a farm labourer in Scotland explained, "An island is an island and that bit of water makes all the difference," to being able to get what you want and to standards of living. However much money you may have it's no use to you on the island. You cannot get what you want and it is no use comparing it with cities like Birmingham or Coventry as some returned emigrants do, "An island is an island - it doesn't matter whether you live here, or wherever you live - it's only just a way of passing the time from being born until you die, and however long you live, its only a fraction of the time you'll be dead, so what does it matter where you live?" This attitude may account in part for the way in which the islanders complain about the hardships of island life, yet accept them without attempting to make any improvements such as, for example, starting a new shop, or increasing the frequency of communication with the mainland by purchasing a more powerful boat.

In their attitudes towards religion, land and kinship obligations the islanders show themselves to be resistant to social change, and it is primarily in the material side of their culture that change is taking place, especially in farming, where the islanders do not hesitate to adopt new ideas and methods, when practicable. They will, however, be cautious about adopting innovations which do not fit in with the present way of life and which would necessitate adaptations. "You see, on an island, everything's bound to be behind. If you get in tractors or anything they soon go wrong and then you have all the bother of taking them out to the mainland again," one farmer explained,

adding that even Tilley lamps became a nuisance when a part becomes broken and you cannot use it until you have visited the mainland to get a spare part to replace it.

The chief innovations that have been introduced on to the island since the turn of the century have been the Tilley lamp, which was first introduced seven years ago, and has now largely replaced the old style paraffin wick-lamp in the island homes, the radio and the bicycle. The bicycle was introduced in 1946 and most houses in which there are active men, or children in their late teens, possess one. There are only about three houses which do not have a radio, run off batteries which have to be charged on visits to the mainland. The islanders feel that the radio is the only reliable way of maintaining contacts with events in the outside world, and consequently attach considerable importance to the possession of a radio, even though the majority of those who have radios rarely have them in working order, and, if they do, use them chiefly just to listen to the news.

The fact that the islanders keep in touch with developments in the outside world, especially with developments in agriculture, is shown by the way in which they de-horn their cattle to prevent damage to the hides of other beasts, by their use and knowledge of fertilisers and patent farming preparations, the way in which the majority of the farmers have their cows Tuberculin tested by the visiting veterinary surgeon every year, and their lambs inoculated against braxy.

The reaction which the islanders have shown to the introduction of football, and the formation of a football team on the island, shows too that they are not unreceptive to new ideas. Last year the priest made an attempt to start an interest in Gaelic football, a game virtually unknown to the islanders, and with the recent arrival of

the doctor, a skilled referee and trainer, the idea has taken hold and the island is rapidly becoming football-conscious. Goal posts, purchased in Westport, have been erected on a pitch near the beach where the islandmen practise regularly. When the Accony team came to play a match on the island most of the islanders, including some of the very old men, who rarely stir out of their houses, came to watch the match, and both men and women take an enthusiastic interest in the activities of the island football team.

In the main the islanders appear willing to adopt innovations if they consider that they will fit in with the traditional way of life, rather than to try and change their way of life to fit in with new innovations. The role of the returned emigrants, who have spent varying periods of time in the British Isles and the United States is a significant indication of the islanders' attitude to social change.

It could be expected that the experiences of these returned emigrants would tend to colour the culture voluntarily, or involuntarily, but in fact the island culture has been virtually unchanged by any such influence. Once they return to the island, emigrants revert very rapidly to their former way of life and do not try to introduce innovations, or even to discuss the possibilities of doing so. The fact that these people, who have experienced the benefits of civilisation, are content with the standards of living on the island, and do not attempt to improve them when they return does not encourage these islanders who have never left the island to make improvements, and may even act as a deterrent.

While the women complain more than do the men, and have less of a liking for island life, yet they do not make any significant contribution towards social change, apart from that which they create, in the social organisation of the community by emigrating. It is the

men rather than the women who adopt a positive attitude towards innovations, and who are responsible for any changes that take place in the way of life on the island.

PART THREE.

THE WAYS IN WHICH THE COMMUNITY ATTEMPTS TO ENSURE
THE SURVIVAL OF THE ISLAND CULTURE.

CHAPTER 14

RELIGION, RITUAL AND THE "STATIONS".

Clare Island is an entirely Catholic community in which no one professes or adheres to any religious belief other than Catholicism. Religion pervades every sphere of human activity on the island; it is the "raison d'etre," of the islanders, and their life is centred round religious celebrations. This is especially so now that the social life of the island has declined to such an extent. Religion is one of the chief mechanisms which, by providing opportunities for social interaction which would otherwise be lacking, ensures the social cohesion of the community.

In every house the lamp of the Sacred Heart burns on a small altar, containers of holy water hang at the bedside and by the entrance, and sacred pictures cover the walls. The family gathers in the kitchen before going to bed to kneel together and say the Rosary. Sunday is a day set apart entirely for worship, on which no work is done that is not absolutely necessary. The preparations for Sunday begin on Saturday evening when everyone goes to Confession. On Sunday morning people go to Mass, dressed in their best clothes, the men in dark serge suits and clean caps, the older women shrouded in heavy black woollen shawls, and the little girls in flimsy white frocks.

Once the service is over no further work is done. The islanders spend the afternoon and evening walking round visiting friends, if the day is fine, or resting at home if it is wet. In the evening, after Benediction, the majority of the younger people attend the dance in the church hall.

Saints' days are rigorously observed and treated in the same way

THE TURF BOGS FROM THE NORTH.



Three quarters of the island is composed of similar terrain, which is used for turf cutting and sheep grazing.

In the distance is the mainland, and the holy mountain of Croagh Patrick, which is climbed by pilgrims from all over Ireland, including Clare Island, at the end of July.

as Sundays, whereas the important festivals of Christmas, Easter and Saint Patrick's day are occasions which the members of a family, even those who have emigrated, try to celebrate together, either by returning home on a visit, or by writing and sending gifts.

On the last Sunday in July many of the islanders, especially the younger ones, will join with pilgrims from all over Ireland in climbing the holy mountain of Croagh Patrick, which lies a few miles from Louisburgh. Some people have made this pilgrimage annually for as long as twenty years.

The importance attached to religion is shown by the fact that it is every man's ambition to enter his son for the priesthood. The priest is held in great awe and respect, partly because he is a representative of the church, and as such the means of communication between the islanders and God, and partly because of the sacrifices he has made to become a priest, especially the sacrifice involved in taking the vow of celibacy.

The way in which the islanders' attitude to religion colours their every activity, and their dependence on it, characteristic of peasants of Western Ireland, is shown by the frequent reference to God in everyday language. The phrases, "Please God," and "Praise be to God," for instance, are in constant use. The first is used as an invocation to the Almighty, and the second as a thanksgiving for some favour granted by Him. "The wind will drop soon, please God.", or "It's a great day for cutting turf, praise be to God." Every time an islander passes some one working in the fields, cutting turf at the bog, thatching his house, or engaged in any other important activity, he will call out, "Bless the work."

Religion is not only a source of spiritual satisfaction to the islanders. It also has a considerable influence on their economic and

social organisation.

The nature of the Catholic religion requires that everyone makes a positive contribution, in the form of money, to the Church and to its priests. The islanders are expected to contribute generously to the Christmas and Easter collections, which provide the priest with the greater part of his income, in addition to which he expects to receive, from every house on the island, the "oat money" tax, an annual tax amounting to a few shillings, and four loads of turf per year, or its equivalent in money - twenty four shillings. He is also occasionally given gifts of bread, lobsters, or early potatoes by his parishioners.

To the islander religion has a certain protective function in specific economic activities. Malinowski¹ observed that in the Trobriand Islands, when any dangerous venture was about to be undertaken, the magico-religious side of the preparations was regarded as as essential as the practical side, and cited open-sea fishing as an example of this. On Clare Island too, fishing is regarded as a dangerous activity which calls for preparations of a magico-religious nature. Before a man launches his curragh at the beginning of the lobster fishing season, or before he first uses a new curragh, he asks the priest to bless it, and ties a small bottle of holy water at the bows to protect himself from danger at sea. Many men dare not venture out in their curraghs without taking holy water with them, and without blessing themselves before they set out, and asking for protection on the dangerous venture they are about to undertake.

When a man is lifting his lobster pots an onlooker who fails to

1. Bronislaw Malinowsky. Magic, Science & Religion. New York 1948.

say, "Bless the work," will be considered to be trying to steal the fisherman's luck for himself.

Some of the old people still preserve the custom of throwing ash collected from the bonfire at St. John's Eve, on to their potato fields to ensure a good crop.

One of the most important functions of religion on the island, however, is the way in which religious activities play a part in increasing the cohesion of the community.

In a society such as Clare, where the population is sparsely scattered, the houses being separated from each other by considerable distances, and where the rugged nature of the countryside makes access from one village to another a virtual impossibility for many of the older people, the weekly visit to mass is not only of religious but of social significance. Since it is obligatory to attend chapel every Sunday morning people who have neither the time nor the strength to pay visits to distant villages are able to meet friends and kin they would otherwise be unable to see from one year's end to another, after the service has taken place.

The period after mass, when the men form into two groups inside the sacred ground of the churchyard, while the women gather on the profane ground outside the churchyard gate, is a valuable opportunity for social interaction. The men indulge in general conversation on farming matters, and will not go home until they have had a good talk, often lasting as long as an hour. If the women wait to talk with other women after mass, it is to meet a specific woman, a sister, sister-in-law, or some friend whom they cannot visit, because of the difficulty of the journey, but with whom they are anxious to talk. They may issue invitations to a friend or neighbour to call round and see them that afternoon, or arrange to call on a friend they have not seen for some

time, later in the week. They do not linger in conversation as long as the men, but are anxious to get home once they have spoken to the specific women they intended to meet.

The influence of religion on the social organisation of the island is manifested in the "rites de passage"; confirmation, at which the islanders of Clare and Inishturk are brought together every four years to participate in a joint religious ceremony, and thus provided with an opportunity for meeting each other and establishing friendly relations, which they would otherwise be unlikely to do; marriage, at which the islanders join in celebrating the union of two of their members, in attending both the marriage service, and the feasting and dancing that precedes and follows it, and most especially, death.

The death of an islander is a matter of great significance to the whole island, an occurrence which affects every family, and the way in which the islanders react when a death occurs, affords an example of the cohesion of the island community.

The following description of the ceremonies that result from the death of an islander, in this case a woman of seventy, who died in hospital on the mainland, will show the nature of this reaction.

Nora died in the mainland hospital at ten o'clock in the morning. By 10.30 her husband, husband's brother and her only son, with whom she was living when she became ill, were told, and by the afternoon the whole island had heard the news, that she had died and that her corpse would be brought to the island at six in the evening for burial. Her close kin and friends went out in the mailboat and travelled to Castlebar, where she had died, to escort the corpse home, the cargo boat owner, second cousin of the deceased, taking out his boat to provide an escort. The corpse was accompanied to Accony by many of

Nora's friends and kin living on the mainland, who came as far as the harbour, and saw the corpse lowered into the boat, the usual mark of respect that the mainlanders will accord the corpse of any islander they know well, who died on the mainland.

On the island everyone who was able to do so had gathered at the Quayside. Everyone was dressed in their best clothes, and even old people who very rarely left their homes at all came down to "meet the coffin."

Every family on the island is expected to send a representative, preferably the head of the household, or his son or wife, to meet the corpse and escort it to the house for the "wake." All the kin of the deceased will be there, and all the close neighbours, who will send as many people as possible from their houses. The number of people who participate in funeral ceremonies does not reflect the status of the deceased or his popularity. For any islander the same rule operates on his death, all the relatives, as many as possible from the house of close neighbours, and fellow villagers, and one representative from every other house, must go to meet the corpse, if it has to be brought in from the mainland, walk in procession behind the coffin from the deceased's house to the chapel on the day of the burial, and attend the funeral service. There is no question of indicating one's dislike of a certain individual by refusing to attend his funeral, and in death every islander is accorded equal respect.

When Nora's coffin was taken from the boat it was carried to her house on the shoulders of four men. It was carried by relays of men as the length of the journey was considerable. After a few yards the bearers at the front moved back to replace those at the back, while two fresh bearers moved in from the front to take the front of the coffin. The same procedure was repeated every few yards, the new

bearers always moving in from the front, and the old bearers moving out from the back. For the bearers to move in from the back instead of the front is regarded as extremely unlucky, and it is never done.

The men followed the coffin, the women and children walking behind them, until the house^{was} reached, when the coffin was carried inside, into the "room" and placed on a table. This action is known as "putting the corpse overboard" (i.e. above board/or table)

Once the corpse had been installed in the room the "wake" started, as people began to call in to pay their respects to the dead and to express their sympathy with the bereaved kin. Before entering the men took off their caps and everyone said a prayer as they came into the kitchen, after which they went into the "room", knelt by the coffin and said another prayer for the dead. After this had been done the islanders returned to the kitchen, which in this case, was so tightly packed with people by ten o'clock in the evening that many mourners could not gain entry and had to wait outside the house until those inside had left. Benches were placed all round the walls and down the centre of the room, and there was not a single vacant seat in the kitchen. People sat on each other's knees, men and women mixing freely, joking and talking. The doorway was crowded with men standing waiting until someone left the house to slip into a vacant seat. The atmosphere was one of sorrow, but at the same time not of a crushing sorrow. People sat together in little circles, talking quietly, and occasionally one of the younger people would laugh loudly, and the older ones would quieten them reproachfully. This period of the evening is known as the "wake", then the islanders gather together to sit with the corpse for several hours, as a mark of respect. Some people, notably kin, fellow villagers and close neighbours, would remain all through the night with the bereaved family, sharing their grief,

and would not leave the house until the burial the next morning. One of the islandmen said that the island was "a nice place to die in," because when one is dying, if dying at home, one is surrounded by friends and neighbours, and even after death, their interest in you does not cease until you are safely in your grave.

In the "room" the kin, immediate family, and close personal friends of the deceased were gathered, sitting round the coffin, talking quietly, and receiving the mourners as they came to pray by the corpse.

Not only the immediate family, in this case the son, husband, husband's brother had to be shaken by the hand with a murmured condolence, "Sorry for your trouble", but condolences also had to be extended to more distant kin, in this case Nora's brother, brother's son, brother's wife, husband's sister, husband's sister's children, and husband's brother's wife.

Everyone was dressed in their best clothes, the girls wearing make-up and jewellery, as if for a dance, and the men with brushed hair and clean shoes. The young people took the opportunity of indulging in some surreptitious courting during the long wait. For them it was a rare opportunity for meeting each other, and they unobtrusively made the most of it.

The son of the house, less crushed with grief than his father, acted as host, keeping the fire ablaze and the Tilley Lamp pumped. He was helped in these duties by his cousin, the two of them sitting one on each side of the fire, neither of them talking to the mourners. Every half hour or so nephews of the deceased passed round large tin plates of cigarettes and everyone, both men and women (who do not normally smoke) took one and the room soon became filled with clouds of cigarette smoke.

At two o'clock tea was served in the other room, the women being asked in to eat first, in relays of six, followed later by the men. There were no women in the house, since Nora's son was unmarried, so her neices acted as hostesses in the preparing and serving of the food.

At about three o'clock people started to leave, first returning to the coffin to say a final prayer. By about three or four o'clock in the morning all the mourners had left, with the exception of Nora's kin, neighbours and people of her village.

The next day the islanders assembled at the house of mourning again and prepared to accompany the coffin to the chapel for burial. It is at this time that the owner of the house, or his nearest kinsman, calls a few close kin and friends of the dead into the house for a drink of whisky. This whisky has been provided by the people of the village, of which the deceased was a member. There is often ill-feeling caused by the selection of certain people for this distinction, and the exclusion of others.

Apart from the close male kin of the deceased and his own personal friends, those considered to be of somewhat higher status, such as the two big farmers, the innkeeper and boat owners, are usually asked in to drink. It is frequently the case that men who feel they were a close personal friend of the deceased, or had done him some good turn at one time or another, consider that they should have been invited to drink and strongly resent the fact that they have been excluded from the invitation.

The number of people invited in to drink is usually limited to about eight people. At the recent death of Antony, for instance, the two big farmers were invited in, along with his great nephew, (his nearest male kinsman) two "friends" of his wife's, one personal friend

who, because of his age, was unable to come, and sent his son to deputise for him, a man who used to work for him, another who provided the trap to carry the coffin to the chapel, and two fellow villagers.

To be invited to drink whisky at a funeral has considerable significance since it is a recognition not only of one's friendship with the deceased but also of one's social standing. It is a social recognition of the fact that one has been a good neighbour and is consequently regarded as an honour and a privilege.

After the drinking of whisky has taken place the funeral procession leaves the house, everyone present having been sprinkled with holy water by a "friend" of the deceased, to the accompaniment of prayers. The coffin will be carried to the chapel by bearers, unless the house is a long way from the chapel, when it will be carried on a trap instead.

Death provides the islanders with an opportunity of meeting each other and interacting together in a religious ceremony. The way in which the whole island joins with the bereaved family, sharing their vigil with the corpse at the "wake," and the way in which the neighbours and villagers express their feeling of unity by giving even greater support to the bereaved family than the rest of the community, in remaining throughout the night with them, and in the case of the villagers, providing the whisky, shows the cohesion of the island community. The fact that every family on the island sends a representative to the wake, and to the funeral, is a recognition of the loss to the community of the deceased, and a formalised indication that the loss of one of its members is not merely a personal one affecting the deceased's family, but a communal one, which affects every household on the island.

The most important religious ceremony that takes place on the

island, and around which present day island social life centres, is the ceremony of the "stations". The custom of holding the "stations" originated in Penal times when penalties were imposed on practising Catholics, and when the celebration of Mass was forbidden. If a priest wanted to say Mass he was forced to do so in disguise, with the utmost secrecy. Even under these conditions priests used to try to celebrate Mass at least twice a year in every village of locality, usually in some one's house, or in some sheltered glen, where they were less likely to be discovered. The place in which Mass was so celebrated was described as the "station" in the sense of "halt", or "stopping place," and on Clare Island every village had its rock which was used as a pulpit and which was known as the "station."

Ever since then, even when the Penal Laws against Catholics were relaxed, people have continued, throughout the west of Ireland, to preserve the practice of holding the twice yearly "station" or celebration of Mass, in each village. One islander said, "The priests would like to do away with the stations altogether, or to make several villages into one, or just have the "stations" in the church, but the people won't hear of it."

On the mainland the importance of the "stations" has diminished and the station service is often held, if it is held at all, not in the villages but in the church. The people of Clare Island however, refuse to let the custom of the "stations" die out, because they provide a diversion from the monotony of everyday life, and consequently have a great significance for everyone on the island.

Twice yearly, in March and October, the "stations" are held in eight of the thirteen villages, (five of the smaller villages combining with larger ones for the purpose of the celebration.) Each time the stations are held it is the turn of a different family in the village

to prepare their house for the celebration of mass, each house in the village being used in rotation, so that the frequency with which a householder has the obligation to hold the station in his house varies, depending on the number of houses in the village. For instance, if a village has six houses, since the stations are held every six months, it will mean that each householder has the stations in his house once in every three years.

The sequence in which the houses of the village hold the station varies from village to village; in some villages the first house to hold the station will be the most westerly, house 1, and this will be followed by the adjacent house, and so on throughout the village, finishing with the most easterly house, and beginning again with house 1. In other villages there will be no such sequence - for instance in Cappnagower there are, for the purpose of the stations, seven houses (a family, formerly living in this village, now living in Glen, insist on holding their station with the Cappnagower villagers) which ranging from west to east in a straight line, are 1,2,3,4,5,6, and 7. The rotation in which the houses hold the dances is not in this order however. The cycle begins with house 2, followed by house 3, then 1,4,5,7 and 6, beginning all over again with house 2. I asked the villagers why they did not work straight through the village, instead of working the rotation in this haphazard way. They say that a lot of the houses, once in the village, have become ruined, and that this has given the cycle its irregularity - "It's been that way ever since I can remember," said one woman. The fact that the sequence in each village, differs means that people of a village often have difficulty in working out who is likely to hold a dance at the station in the next village. They cannot determine it by remembering who last had the station in the village, and assuming it must be the turn of the next door neighbour

A WESTERN FARM.



This house, recently abandoned, was occupied by the ethnographer, during fieldwork.

Until recently the field in the foreground was under cultivation, and the growth of the rushes in rows indicates the presence of ridges and trenches where potatoes were once planted.

On the right of the picture is the holy island of Caher, an uninhabited islet.

of this person, but instead must remember the particular order in which the houses of that particular village hold the station.

Occasionally a person living alone will not be able to prepare his house so that it is sufficiently clean for the station to be held in it. He would be ashamed for the priest to say Mass for the assembled villagers, if his house was in too ramshackle a state, and in such a case he would "send the station to the chapel", i.e. he would ask the priest to hold a special mass in the chapel for his village, instead of holding it in his house. To "send the station to the chapel", is regarded as very shameful, and if the person concerned is willing, however bad a state of repair he has let his house fall into, all the women of his village will help him to clean it, and to prepare the house so that the station can be held in the village instead. Because of this cooperation by the people of a village it is very rarely that a station is held in the chapel. In Strake, for instance, a seventy year old bachelor living alone said he would "be ashamed" to send the station to the chapel, and he will send for his sister on the mainland to come and stay with him and prepare the food and clean the house, when it is his turn to hold the station. If she cannot come he asks the "girls of the village" to do so instead.

The "station house" is expected to provide breakfast after Mass for the people of the village. On Clare Island a custom, which has now died out almost completely on the mainland, is still preserved, the custom of holding a dance in the house, not only for the villagers, but for many of the other islanders as well, on the night of the station day. This is not, however, obligatory and the number of people who are willing to go to the trouble and expense of holding a dance, after the work involved in preparing for the breakfast alone, is limited.

The chief reason why a person will not hold a dance in his house is lack of hospitality, and meanness, and such people are regarded very unfavourably by the rest of the islanders. People complain of one man, who has a well-maintained house, plenty of money and a son and daughter to help him with the preparations, "They always go to other dances, and they're asked to every one. They could give one themselves easily but they just don't want the bother." They contrast this man with J. the father of a large family of young children, in much poorer circumstances, yet who always has a large dance when his turn comes round, "He asks the whole island to it," and this is regarded as extremely generous. On this account alone J. is well thought of by the rest of the community.

In one extreme case of meanness and lack of hospitality, that of A., a man who has plenty of female help in the house, could easily give a dance and yet never does so, and who fails to maintain the high island standards of hospitality, not only on the important occasion of the stations, but also in everyday life, by discouraging visitors from coming to his house, the islanders have started to express their disapproval by omitting to ask him to any dances. "People have started to stop asking him now - I didn't ask him to ours," said one woman. On the other hand, another woman who never gives a station dance, because she says her house is too small, yet who is extremely welcoming and hospitable to visitors, is not treated with the same disapproval, but is asked to many of the station dances.

Though people who refuse to hold a dance in their house tend to be regarded as mean it is probably not more than about fifty per cent of the island families who are willing to hold dances, and so

though there are invariably eight separate "stations" every six months, there are very rarely as many as eight station dances. There are more likely to be about four or five.

Some of the older people refuse to hold a dance, not because of meanness but because they feel that, after the celebration of mass in the house in the morning, Christ might still be present in the house, in which case the dance would offend Him. One young girl defended the custom of holding a dance, "Sure didn't Our Lord go to a wedding, and He wouldn't mind a dance - it's a grand custom!"

If a person in the station house has died recently this too will make it unlikely that the owners will hold a dance in the house, though they might in such a case have a "party", where there is no dancing, but singing and story telling, and the tea is still provided. A party is not regarded by the islanders as as enjoyable as a dance, and it is regarded as a great pity if a family which usually holds a good dance happen to be observing mourning for a close "friend" when their turn comes round. If a member of the household has died the family will not hold a dance for two years after the death. One woman, discussing whether or not her brother, since the second anniversary of his wife's death occurred only a month before he was due to have the station, would hold a dance said "She's only been dead two years and she was a young woman - I'd be very disappointed if they do have a dance - I wouldn't expect it of them."

Another factor which may condition whether or not the station house holds a dance is the presence of old people in the house, who find the noise and excitement of a dance trying, or who are ill, or on the verge of death at the time of the stations. One family who are very anxious to have a dance in the house, cannot do so until the wife's parents, who still own the house, die - "The old people

wouldn't hear of us holding a dance," said their granddaughter rather resentfully. Generally speaking "It depends on how they're situated," whether people can hold a dance or not, and it may happen in some years that several deaths and the consequent mourning observations cut down the number of dances considerably. The spring stations of 1957, for instance, were exceptional in that, out of the eight station houses, seven held dances, the one family who did not do so being that of the exceptionally mean man mentioned previously. At the stations in the following autumn however only four dances were held, one house abstaining because of meanness, one because of a recent death in the house, and two because the presence of old people in the house prevented the holding of a dance.

The importance which the islanders attach to the celebration, and in particular to the dance that follows it, is shown by the pride which they take in talking about the stations - "I don't suppose you'll ever see anything like that in England," they said.

The social life of the island centres round the cycle of the stations, in fact it can be said that the islanders live from one station to the next. As soon as the last station celebration is over they will begin to discuss the next one, to decide which house in each village is due to have the station, and to speculate as to whether these people will hold a dance or not, and to how many dances they can expect to be invited. The keenness with which people anticipate the stations and the importance that they attach to having a dance is shown by an incident that took place in Ballytuohy a few years ago. An old couple living alone, renowned for the good dances that they gave in their house, felt that, when their turn to hold the station came round again, they were too old to bother with a dance. The villagers were extremely disappointed, and knowing that the old

couple were often short of turf because they had no one to cut it for them, seven of the men of the village went to the old woman and said they would each spend a day cutting turf for her if she would agree to have a dance after all, so she consented. The men kept their part of the bargain, and the turf that they cut lasted the old couple two years.

Preparations for the stations begin several weeks before the ceremony actually takes place. In each village the house in which the station is to be held is freshly whitewashed and painted, and especially in the spring, when the rest of the houses look grey and battered after the winter storms, the station houses stand out a gleaming white. The house is thoroughly cleaned inside too, newly painted (many people only paint the interior of their house from "station to station."), the curtains are washed specially, and the floor scrubbed. The village women will help the hostess with the cleaning, spending several days in the house helping with the preparations.

People say that, especially with those who live on their own, it is only the fact that they have to hold the stations every few years that prevents their houses from falling to pieces, as without such an incentive many people would not trouble to keep their houses in good repair. They cite as an example a widow who "sends the station to the chapel" - "She never has the station and that's the cause of her house going to pieces." "It's good for a man living on his own to have the station - he has to clean up his house and paint it and he mightn't do it otherwise." "Everyone who's living alone especially should have the station - it would mean they'd have to clean and paint the house once every four years or so, and that would keep it standing at least," said one woman disapprovingly of a bachelor

who lives alone, refuses to have the stations, and whose house is almost in ruins as a result of neglect.

Following the cleaning, the hostess, assisted by her daughters, sisters, and other female kin, or if she has no close kin, by the woman of the village (not by non-village neighbours, who are excluded from giving help if they do not belong to the same village as the family who are holding the dance) begins the baking of cakes for the breakfast and for the tea that will be served at the dance. "The baking is the hardest part of the stations - the porter cakes and sweet cakes are a lot of trouble - they take a lot of time."

In addition to the ordinary cakes of bread which take about an hour to bake, sweet cakes, fruit cakes made with porter, buns and biscuits are also made especially for the station. These cakes take about two hours each to make, and the average number a house needs to bake for both breakfast and dance is twenty seven, consequently "The station house always has a lovely smell of baking," for several days before the station is held, and a great deal of turf is consumed.

The people of the village will all combine in sending gifts of food to the station house, beforehand to assist with the baking, and on the actual day as well. For instance one woman told me that at the last station she sent to the station house a few days beforehand two dozen eggs, and on the day itself she sent down two pounds of butter. A villager will send down such things as sweet cake, eggs, milk, and butter, made into decorative pats to make it look more attractive. At the spring stations, especially, everyone is short of milk and all the villagers will bring along as much milk as they can for the breakfast and the dance, and if they cannot spare any butter of their own they will buy butter to give to the station house. Again the

giving of gifts of food to the station house is confined to fellow-villagers. Next door neighbours, even if they happen to be on extremely friendly terms with the hostess, will not make her any such gifts.

The women say that the station, with a dance, costs at least £10. The primary source of the expense is not the food - often, for instance, people are given so much butter by the villagers that they can use it for weeks afterwards and even give it away - but the decoration of the house and the purchasing of odd things such as a new bowl for washing the delf, a larger kettle, and so on.

Fellow villagers will also lend the station house items of equipment such as additional chairs and benches, or a Tilley lamp, if the hostess does not possess one.

If a man living alone is willing to hold the "station" in his house this is regarded as a great point in his favour, "Everyone is glad to help," and all the women of the village will come in to do the baking and cleaning. At the west, for instance, an old bachelor living alone is always willing, not only to have the breakfast but also to have a party in the evening for the people of his village. He will be helped in preparing the house by his cousin who lives next door and who will take charge of the operations, and by the other women of the village - they will all "do the stations for him." i.e., prepare the house and food for the reception of the villagers and other chosen guests.

The spring stations begin in mid-March and last for eight days, excluding Sunday, the priest holding the station first in the most westerly village of Tormore, and on the following days working his way round the island from west to north, via the eastern region, ending with the last station at Ballytuohy. The islanders say that

they wish the stations could last longer, and that there could be an interval of at least a day between each one, because by the end of a week of dances and late nights people are tired, and cannot enjoy the last two or three dances wholeheartedly. In the spring of 1957 there were seven dances, and this was an exceptional number. People say that there will not be another year like it for a long time.

At nine o'clock in the morning the priest arrives at the station house, where all the villagers have already assembled, to say Mass. The service takes place in the kitchen, and after it is finished, breakfast is served, the priest being served first, then the men, and finally the women. The breakfast, of eggs, tea, bread and sweet cake, may continue until two o'clock in the afternoon, and if it is a fine day the women will remain inside the house while the men go outside and stand talking on the "street." The station day is regarded as a holiday for all the village, on which no work is done, and during the day most of the villagers will drop in and out of the "station" house several times. The women will visit the house again for tea and stay chatting for an hour-to do so, even if you have been unable to attend Mass in the morning, is an obligation and the host and hostess would be very hurt if anyone failed to make this visit on the day of the station. When the children return from school they are asked into the station house for tea, and are thus given the opportunity of participating in the celebration of the station which, until the evening, remains entirely an intra-village activity, from which all non-villagers are excluded. This serves to emphasise the unity of the village, and to bind the villagers more closely together, in the participation of a religious ceremony, which emphasises their membership of a single group, the village.

During the day, if there is going to be a dance in the evening,

the host will either go round to people's houses himself to invite his guests, or may send round one of his own children or those of his close kin, to issue invitations in other villages on the island. Unlike a normal house dance, which is open to any one who wants to go - "They are for the whole island," - a person cannot go to a station dance unless he receives a personal invitation. Even people of the host's own village, who expect to be asked as a matter of course, would not go unless they received a personal invitation, which they invariably do. The invitations to a station dance are never issued until after Mass has been celebrated, and the people of the village often become very anxious if they have not received an invitation, worrying in case they have been forgotten. The number of people the host will ask to the dance, apart from those in his own village, varies. Some hosts ask most of the islanders, and some limit their invitations to a certain area, for instance only asking those in the region in which their village belongs, but there are usually representatives from every village at the station dances, since, however much a man may limit the number of his guests, he will invariably ask a few personal friends from other villages, as well as his close kin, and those of his wife. The kin of host and hostess are always expected to attend the dance. One girl of fourteen said, "I didn't want to go to any of the dances - I only went to T's because he is my uncle - at least he is my mama's uncle - I wouldn't have gone otherwise."

Some people who are asked to the dance may refuse the invitation on the grounds that they are too old, but in such cases they will send someone from their house to represent them. It would be regarded as very insulting not to do so, in the same way that a person who accepts the invitation and then does not appear at the dance is

regarded as extremely impolite.

Many people who do not usually attend dances, old people and young children, will attend their own station dance, (i.e. the one held in their village) and that held by their close kin.

The dance begins at about ten o'clock in the evening, by which time the women and children have already arrived, and one or two youths may be there, with a few older men, while the majority of the men start drifting in, after fortifying themselves first at the pub, and may not all arrive until midnight.

The dance is held in the small concrete-floored kitchen which has been cleared of its furniture and is bare, except for the dresser and benches placed all round the walls as seats for those who are not dancing. A huge turf fire, on which water is being boiled for the tea in the largest kettle the hostess can obtain, blazes on the hearth. The walls are covered in fresh whitewash, which brushes off on to the men's dark suits as they stand talking and smoking, leaning against the walls and watching ^{the} women. The music is played on a melodeon, the two or three skilled players on the island taking it in turns to play.

The host and hostess stand at the door and welcome each visitor, as he arrives, both shaking him by the hand, while a sister of the wife will take the visitors' coats and he will do his best to find a seat on the benches. The more important guests, such as the doctor's wife, and the innkeeper's wife, are given the most comfortable seats near the fire.

Everyone is dressed in their best clothes, the men in suits, the older men wearing caps, even when they are dancing, to hide their thinning hair, the girls wearing taffeta dresses from America, make-up, nylons and jewellery.

The dances are "sets," a form of dancing resembling square dancing, in which only four couples take part, or "half sets" in which only two couples take part. The sets are extremely energetic and take about three minutes to complete. They will be varied by a fast waltz, or when people become too tired, by a song played, while everyone sits and talks. Set dances are not the ideal dance for a small room since their performance requires so much space that only eight people can dance at a time. This means that many people only dance once or twice in the evening. In fact the "dance" is more than anything a social occasion, since fifty per cent of the guests do not dance at all, being too old or too young, and with the exception of a few middle-aged men, the dancing is confined on the whole to the young people. The older women very rarely dance because they regard it as undignified to do so, but at the station, where the atmosphere is one of jovial informality and friendliness, an occasion on which everyone, young or old, is expected to enjoy themselves to the full, the men, especially the more chivalrous ones, will see that many of the older women are asked to dance. One man in particular makes a point of dancing with all the older women, married or single, who would not otherwise be likely to dance, at the stations. Many of the older women are very embarrassed to be asked to dance and need a great deal of persuasion, since they feel that all the young people will be laughing at them, but they never refuse to dance when asked, and get great enjoyment from doing so, once they have started the set.

The music begins, and the men step out on to the floor, to be joined after the introductory bars of the set by their partners, who are never invited openly (unless they happen to be older women) but by a wink, a sign, or merely a jerk of the head. There is a complete

mingling of people of different ages, boys of fifteen dancing with girls of thirty, men of fifty with girls of sixteen.

There is however no lack of consciousness of sex. Because of the lack of seats the girls are obliged to sit on the knees of the nearest man, regardless of who he is. He may be an uncle, brother or neighbour, a sweetheart, or a comparative stranger from a distant village, but there will be no inhibition about perching on his knees, nor will he resent it. A considerable amount of horseplay, as well as of more serious courting, takes place surreptitiously. The girls are just as willing to initiate love-making as the men and a mainland girl, teaching on the island, said of this, "Aren't the girls rough at dances here (i.e. in initiating love-making) When I first went to dances here I didn't want to dance - I was so fascinated I just wanted to sit and watch!"

While the dancing is going on the guests chat together and joke with each other, men and women talking to each other, often indulging in the telling of bawdy stories, and in mild flirtations. The older men gather in a corner by the fireside and smoke, not joining in the dancing, while the children of the house watch quietly and unobtrusively, often falling asleep on their father's knee.

After the dance has been going on for about three hours the hostess, assisted by her kin, or if she has none, by the ~~women~~ of the village, starts to serve her guests with tea. This is regarded as an essential part of the dance. The table is set in the "room", which serves as both bedroom and parlour. It is laid with the best delf, and spread with several varieties of bread, cakes, buns, butter, jam, occasionally biscuits purchased from the mainland, and delicacies sent by kin overseas especially for the station.

Because there are not enough chairs or delf, and the kettle

does not hold enough water for more than six, only six people can eat at a time. After each "sitting" the hostess and her helpers must wash the delf, re-set the table, and make a fresh pot of tea. The women say that this serving of tea is the most tiring part of the station dance, because of the speed with which the delf must be washed, and the table re-laid ready for the next sitting.

The hostess comes into the kitchen quietly and invites six women in to tea, the order of the men being asked in first to eat, which operated in the morning, now being reversed. (At dances the women are invariably served with tea before the men, since the men are not believed to be so much in need of nourishment, having visited the pub before arriving). In recent years the old custom of asking in the most important people, such as the innkeeper's wife, or the teacher, to eat first, has died out, because of the influence of a powerful personality on the island. He insisted that, in his house, if people were worth inviting in the first place there should be no distinction made between them once they arrived, since they were all his friends. He said that, when the hostess was ready to serve tea she should invite the women nearest to her as she came into the kitchen, regardless of who they were, and so on, round the room, until all the women had been served, and then repeat the procedure with the men. The rest of the islanders rapidly adopted this custom because of their dislike of status differentiation, and now the old method of inviting people in to tea, starting with the most important women, and ending with the least important, has virtually died out, though visitors such as myself, would tend to be among the first to be asked in, unless they were on very familiar terms with the hosts.

After about ten minutes the first "sitting" of guests have finished and are ready to rejoin the dancers. The hostess then asks

in another six women, and so on, until all the women have eaten, then she starts to ask in the men, inviting the younger boys, with the most voracious appetites, last. Often if the dance continues until four or five o'clock in the morning, as station dances often do, a second tea will be served in a similar fashion.

When people become exhausted with dancing the singing begins, those known to be good singers being persuaded to sing. Most people are very reluctant to do so, and will need a great deal of persuasion, which is usually given either by the host, hostess, or by a daughter of the house. The songs are usually patriotic ones, or popular songs with an Irish flavour, such as "Galway Bay", "The Homes of Donegal", "Dunaree" or "St. Teresa of the Roses." One man includes in his repertoire a comic song, ridiculing a bachelor's attempt at courtship, and a song about Clare Island, written by an exile in Chicago, both of which are extremely popular. No attempt is made to sing songs in Irish.

The singing will usually continue for about an hour, each singer being duly applauded when he finishes, and it is usually the prelude to the end of the dance, after which people begin to collect their coats and wander home. Before they leave they must shake their host and hostess by the hand again, to thank them for the evening's entertainment.

There is a recognised etiquette about leaving. It is regarded as very impolite to leave before having tea, and once having eaten, to leave straight after it. One is expected to "make decent after the tea," by waiting at least an hour in order to dispel any impression that one's main reason for attending the dance at all was to partake of the tea. On leaving one must not omit to shake hands with the host and hostess, a formality which is not adhered to at the normal

house dances, but, like the formal invitation, is part of the ceremony which accompanies the station dance.

The stations are a very important factor in maintaining the social organisation of the island, partly because they emphasise the unity of the village; they are one of the rare intra-village activities in which all the villagers cooperate together, by participating together in a religious ceremony, which emphasises their common membership of the village, and by cooperating in sending gifts of food to the station house, acting, as a village, as hosts to the other islanders who attend the station dance.

Unlike the house dance, the station dances are not confined chiefly to young people, but also include the older people, especially the married women, who never attend house dances, unless they go to help a relative to serve tea, but who are much more willing to attend the station dance. The married and middle-aged women are the group in the island community which has the most limited range of social interaction, consequently for them the station dances have special significance.

They are not only dances, but social occasions at which people from all over the island can meet, talk and enjoy themselves. They are long-anticipated events and are a valuable mechanism for creating social cohesion in a community where opportunities for social interaction are few and far between. This is all the more so now that the number of ordinary house dances held every year is declining. The ceremony of the stations ensures that dances are held regularly twice a year, whereas there is no such compulsion on people to hold house dances, and they are consequently much less likely to do so.

The importance which the islanders attach to the holding of the stations, and the effort which they make to continue to do so, in the

face of the continual decline in the population, for instance the way in which the villagers cooperate in helping people living alone, or people who are too old to prepare their house without help, to prepare for the stations, rather than to allow these houses to "send the station to the chapel," thus forfeiting a long-awaited social occasion, is a significant feature of the nativistic movement on the island.

Religion on Clare Island is not only important in itself to the islanders, but it has a vital function in that it provides opportunities for social interaction through the meetings that take place every Sunday after Mass, the "rites de passage," and the "station" ceremonies.

THE WESTERN VILLAGE OF STRAKE.



This picture shows the distance that separates the houses of a single village. The two central houses are atypical in being so close together. Note the scattered settlement pattern and the small size of the fields.

The wall built by the Congested Districts Board runs at the foot of the "big hill," Croaghmore, and separates the arable land from the pasture land.

CHAPTER 15

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION

At the turn of the century, when the island population was more than twice the size it is now, there was a flourishing social life. The visits of tourists in the summer months and the large number of people in every family encouraged the islanders to give dances, often as many as four a week in the summer, while the fact that there were more people in each family tended to halve the amount of work each person had to do, and to leave everyone with more time to pay social calls on their neighbours.

People frequently stress the contrast between the gaiety of island life then and the loneliness which has replaced it, because of the way in which the houses are falling empty. All the young people emigrate as soon as they are old enough to do so, leaving behind a few old and middle-aged people, living in isolated farms a considerable distance from each other. The lack of young people in the house to help with the work, results in the remaining islanders being too preoccupied with household and farming activities to have either the time or the energy to expend on social activities.

The scattered nature of the settlement pattern, and the lack of any focal meeting place, such as a village square or a shopping centre, apart from the Quay and the Chapel, have, with the decline that has taken place in the population during the last fifty years, resulted in the average islander's opportunities for social interaction becoming very limited.

The men can meet their neighbours during the day, working side by side on their farms, cooperating in lending each other equipment

or labour. They meet at the turf bogs when they are away from home all day cutting turf, eating their meals together over a camp fire, or stopping to smoke a cigarette, or when they are out fishing on a warm spring evening. They are frequently at the Quay fetching sacks of flour, or potatoes, or selling wool, and will meet each other, stopping for a chat and a drink in the pub, whereas for a woman there is less opportunity of meeting anyone during the day except her immediate neighbours.

They have an advantage over the women in that they have, in the pub at the Quay, a meeting place to which they can go on any evening that they feel inclined for company. The pub is open, sometimes all day, and usually from about eight in the evening until well after midnight. On weekdays there are usually about eight to a dozen men in the pub, and on Sunday night most of the islandmen congregate there for a drink, and there is a much bigger crowd. Boys usually start drinking at about seventeen, or eighteen, if they have the money, though some keep the Confirmation Pledge to abstain until they are twenty five.

When a boy first goes to a pub he will not go with his father but with friends of his own age. "No father here wishes to see his son taking drink, or drinks with him, or anyone else, unless after pulling a hard journey in a curragh." Twenty years ago people used to drink together, the men said, standing each other rounds in rotation, but, of late, men prefer to drink on their own, usually drinking stout and occasionally whisky.

When a licence was first obtained for the pub about fifty years ago, it was just a kitchen with a large open hearth and a blazing fire, with chairs all round it, where the men would occasionally bring their wives, who would sit with them and drink whisky punch.

Unmarried women or women without their husbands were not allowed in. Now entry to the pub is virtually taboo to the women, "The pub is no place for a woman," the men say. The only woman who occasionally drinks in the pub is the wife of a big farmer, herself a teacher, who, because of her high status, is unafraid to enter the pub when her husband is there and to drink with him, though she says that she feels that the men resent her doing so. The women often grumble "There's no amusement here for the women - no place for them to go - the men have the pub," "There should be somewhere to go on a Sunday evening - it's an awful life."

The men play cards during the winter, for small stakes, in one of the more popular visiting houses, the young boys of sixteen or so standing round the wall looking on. Any man who can afford to play for the higher stakes of the poker clique, which is mainly composed of salaried non-islanders, can also do so, though, since few can afford to do so, the poker clique remains virtually a closed circle.

There are several men on the island who are experts in cutting hair, who will cut anyone's hair without charge. This is usually done on a Saturday evening, again in one of the visiting houses, and groups of men and boys get together to talk and have their hair cut, making it a social evening.

One boy, who had always had his hair cut by his mother, was told by her, when he reached fifteen, to go along with the other boys and have his hair cut, because he was almost a man and too old for her to go on cutting his hair. Once he arrived at the house he was too shy to go in and ask for a haircut, but the following week he was accompanied by his sixteen year old cousin, who had already had his hair cut at the house several times, and he had his first hair cut in the company of men, a significant step for him. His mother will not cut his hair again.

Though women will occasionally cut each other's hair this will be more in the nature of a private arrangement between two close friends, rather than a cover for a social gathering, as is the men's hair cutting evening.

Other opportunities for social interaction which are open to the men and not to the women are those afforded by participation in sporting events. The county curragh championships and the national championships, between the finalists from seven counties, are of great interest to the men of the island, and form a subject of discussion for many days before the races actually take place. Every one or two years a new racing curragh is made by the island carpenter, who attempts each time to perfect the design by such devices as increasing the length and sharpening the prow. The curragh frame is built in the church hall, and taken into the open for covering with canvas and for tarring. All through the preparations the men gather round it to discuss its potentialities, and they display great interest in its first trials at the Quay. The design is highly secret and it is not discussed with the mainland crew before the county championships.

As many of the islanders as possible, chiefly men and boys, will accompany the curragh and its crew of three to the mainland to support them. The curragh races are an important institution since they provide an opportunity for the islanders to express their unity by supporting their chosen representatives, the men of the curragh crew, who attempt to achieve prestige for the island by winning the championships. They provide the men with an opportunity to meet each other, when they discuss the preparations for the race, and to meet the mainlanders on the day of the races.

The islandmen are developing a rapidly growing interest in football; since the formation of an island team, not only do they visit

the mainland regularly to play matches but they also meet every Tuesday night to practise, often playing until it is too dark to see, and then adjourning to the pub for a drink.

The women's opportunities for meeting other islanders, men or women, are considerably more limited than the men's because they are confined to the house for most of the day. They may occasionally help in the fields or at the bog, and will welcome the chance to do so, since it is a means whereby they can meet their friends and exchange news and gossip.

The restricted life which the island woman leads is due partly to the island tradition that a woman retires from social life when she marries and should be content to remain at home. This view is expressed in the condemnation an island woman has for her sister-in-law, living on the mainland, because she used to go out at night leaving her young children alone in the house. "She didn't go anywhere in particular, just from house to house, but here a woman doesn't go out at night at all, let alone every night like she did - she never made a proper home for them - there was never any comfort."

Married women are not expected to go to dances. They may occasionally go to station dances, and will almost certainly go to the station dance held in their own village, but they are most unlikely to go to house dances or to the weekly dances held in the church hall. Married men, on the other hand, are free to go to whatever dances they please and to dance with single girls. One woman of forty with several young children says that she does not go to the dances any more, not even to station dances, because, "Once you stop going you get into the habit and you never go then." Her husband frequently goes to dances, including the weekly one in the church hall, where he dances with young girls, and she admits

that she would love to go with him, "But if a married woman goes everyone starts talking about it. A. used to go in spite of what everyone said, and she was right!" A., who died recently, was an Inishturk woman, married to an islandman, who used to attend the dances in the hall regularly with her two older children, bringing her younger children along to watch, while her husband spent the evening at the pub. She was admired for doing so, rather than disapproved of, but no other woman will follow her example, except for the atypical island personality K. (the woman who defied her husband's father in order to marry, and to gain control of his farm for her husband.) K. occasionally attends the weekly dances with her husband, but she is regarded as rather ridiculous, since such behaviour is generally felt to be unbecoming to an islandwoman. A's behaviour was understandable because she was a "Turk" and consequently much more "free". (uninhibited and gay) The Inishturk people are regarded as very "free" and are consequently expected to behave in a very different way from the Clare Islanders, who regard this aspect of their character with amused tolerance.

Many of the women very rarely leave their houses, even to go visiting, and if they want any purchases from the shop, they will usually send their children or husband down to the Quay rather than go themselves. This is probably partly because, if they do go to the Quay they feel obliged to change out of their working clothes into their best clothes before leaving the house. This is especially true if they live a long way from the Quay and are likely to be subjected to the scrutiny of a good many neighbours on their journey. Unlike the men, the island women are extremely sensitive about their appearance and, if they are wearing dirty or torn clothes they will not even come to the doorway to greet a friend or neighbour who is

passing by, in case this person will later ridicule them to other people, because of their untidy appearance.

One widow of sixty was making her first journey to the Quay for seven months in May. She usually asks a neighbour's child to run errands or post letters for her, since she lives three miles from the Quay and has rheumatism, which makes the walk difficult. Another woman with five children usually sends them to the Quay whenever she needs something, but made a visit there herself, after a year had elapsed since her last visit. She returned very depressed and said she was struck by the way the Quay had changed even in the last year, by its deserted aspect and the absence of people there. "I'd be better pleased not to go again - it's a dead sort of a place - there's no one there."

Some women make a weekly shopping trip to the Quay, combining it with visits to kin and friends on the way. One woman living at the far west cycles there every week, calling on her cousins at the Quay, and on return spending a few hours with a friend in Gurteen, finishing the afternoon with a final cup of tea with her husband's cousin in Lecarrow.

Many women who rarely leave the house rely on meeting people on the walk to chapel, and look forward to the weekly exchange of news and gossip. One sixty year old spinster said she always enjoys going to chapel with the women of the village and hearing everyone's news, and when she fell ill, and was not able to go for two weeks to mass she felt lonely and out of touch, since she saw no one, "I heard nothing at all."

Whereas the majority of the men visit the mainland regularly, going out to livestock fairs, or to do necessary shopping, or to attend local sporting events such as football matches, and are on

good terms with a considerable number of the mainlanders, especially in Louisburgh, the majority of the women visit the mainland only on very rare occasions.

A woman's opportunities for making trips to the mainland vary considerably and are conditioned by four factors; the amount of money she possesses, whether or not she has young children who cannot be left alone; whether she has a daughter old enough to manage the house and children in her absence, and whether she has kin on the mainland with whom she can stay if she is weatherbound. She will be very reluctant to go otherwise as she is likely to be very shy of staying with strangers. The following examples will show the way in which such factors condition the number of times a woman visits the mainland in a year.

1. Ellen Gallagher¹ Aged forty, she is married with seven young children. Her husband has a poor holding and they are in rather poorer circumstances than most of the islanders. Poverty and the fact that her daughter is not yet old enough to look after the house prevents her from visiting the mainland though her husband's brother, married, and living in Louisburgh, would accommodate her. She has not been to the mainland for several years apart from visits to Castlebar hospital for the birth of her children.

2. Nora Flynn Aged sixty, she lives with her invalid husband and two bachelor brothers. Though the family is not short of money she is the only woman in the house and cannot leave the men. Her last visit to the mainland took place two years ago when, on the island doctor's advice, she took her husband to see a heart specialist in Dublin. On this visit she stayed with her sister who keeps a hotel in Dublin.

1. Fictitious names have been substituted here, as in all other references to specific people in this thesis.

CURRAGHS AND LOBSTER POTS AT THE WESTERN HARBOUR.



The large wooden box at the right of the photo is used for keeping the lobsters, once they have been caught, until they are sold. It is kept submerged in the harbour while lobsters are stored in it.

3. Maggie Barrett. Aged fifty, she is married with five children. The family is in average circumstances and she could afford to visit the mainland several times a year. Her husband takes over the milking in her absence and her daughter of fourteen bakes and runs the house. She has kin with whom she can stay in Louisburgh, Westport and Castlebar. She only visits the mainland once a year, however, usually during the slack period after planting and before harvesting, in June or July, the period when most women who intend to visit the mainland will do so. She will stay for two or three days with kin in Louisburgh, rarely going even as far afield as Westport, and will do urgent shopping, get her teeth attended to, and have her hair "permed," the three essentials of a woman's visit to the mainland.

4. Jane O'Malley. A spinster of fifty five living with her bachelor brother, who possesses a curragh and is therefore able to fetch supplies and household equipment from Achill when he is selling lobsters. This minimises the need for her to visit the mainland. She cannot leave her brother alone as he refuses to milk or to cook for himself, so she has to ask her second cousin's daughter to come and look after the house in her absence. Though the family are in comfortable circumstances because of the money the brother earns by lobster fishing, since she is his sister and not his wife, he keeps her very short of money, handling all the expenses himself. She earns a little money by baking bread for the school but often has great difficulty in getting together enough money for her yearly visit to the mainland, to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Knock, Mayo. She will stay away for two days only, spending the nights with a second cousin in Westport.

5. Bridget Winters. Aged forty five, her husband is in slightly higher than average circumstances, since he is one of the two most

skilled carpenters on the island and supplements his income by doing such jobs as building currachs, or repairing houses in the winter, and also by a little lobster fishing. He has his own canoe and will take his wife to the mainland whenever she wants to go, so she does not incur any expense in getting to Accony. Her daughter keeps house in her absence. She stays with second cousins in Louisburgh and makes two or three visits to the mainland each year, each lasting a few days, shopping, visiting friends and going to the cinema.

6. Nora Burns. Aged fifty, she is married with five children. Her husband has a large holding and a big flock of sheep and they are in comfortable circumstances. He also has a curragh in which he will take her to the mainland. She is a mainland woman and has parents and kin in Mayo, yet, in spite of the fact that her daughter is old enough to keep house, she will not go out more than once a year, at the most, and then only on a special occasion, such as to meet her sister's son on holiday from the States.

7. Kathleen Flynn. Aged forty, she is married with two young children. Her husband owns one of the largest flocks of sheep on the island and also possesses a curragh in which he takes her to the mainland. He will do the housekeeping in her absence and look after the younger child too. She has parents in Achill and she will make three or four trips to Achill and the mainland every year, taking her elder child with her.

8. Agnes Moran. An Inishturk woman, aged forty, with seven young children. The family is in slightly lower than average circumstances. Her brother-in-law owns the cargo boat and will occasionally take her and the younger children on a visit of a few days to Inishturk, where she will stay with her kin, returning in the Inishturk boat when it

next visits the mainland, a special detour being made to put her ashore on Clare. Poverty prevents much shopping and she will visit the mainland about once every two or three years.

9. Evelyn Ruddy. Aged forty, she is the wife of one of the big farmers, and teacher in the larger island school. She and her husband are very wealthy by island standards. She has a sister in Castlebar, and will visit the mainland at least twice a year, staying in Castlebar and perhaps going to Dublin for a few days, where she does a considerable amount of shopping.

The majority of women do not visit the mainland more than once a year, and many of them even less frequently, whereas their husbands or brothers will make about twelve visits a year to the mainland. In 1957 the majority of women did not visit the mainland at all. Only 18 did so, three going to hospital to have babies, one to Knock on a pilgrimage, three to get in supplies of food and paint to decorate the house, because kin from America were coming on a visit, one to meet a sister on holiday from England in Westport, one to see her daughter into a job as a nursemaid in Castlebar, one to go to the bank, two to hospital, one to stay with a brother in Galway, another with a sister in Accony, another with a sister in Castlebar, and only three for a few days holiday. A few of the younger girls went out on day trips to football matches or to the races, but this is typical of the way in which women's visits to the mainland are in the main limited to essential trips rather than holidays.

Table of participation in activities in which there is an
opportunity for social interaction

x indicates full participation in the activity.

P indicates possible participation in the activity.

- indicates that there is no participation in the activity.

<u>Nature of activity</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Children</u>
Agricultural work	x	P	P
Turf-cutting	x	P	P
Shopping	x	P	x
Fairs	x	-	-
Weekly dances	x	P	-
Chapel	x	x	x
Station Dances	x	x	P
Visiting	x	x	-
Drinking at pub	x	-	-
Card Playing	x	-	P
Football	x	-	P
Fishing	x	-	-
Curragh races	x	P	P
Hair cutting	x	-	-
School	-	-	x

It can be seen that in these activities, whereas the men are able to participate fully in fourteen of the fifteen activities listed (this does not of course mean that every islandman necessarily takes part in all these activities, merely that if he wishes to do so he may) the women are able to participate fully in only three of the fifteen activities, visiting, the station dances, and going to chapel, with occasional participation in five other activities,

work in the fields, or at the turf, shopping, going to the weekly dance or to curragh races (these last two being limited to the young, unmarried women). In other words, seven opportunities of social interaction are closed to the women, while only one is closed to the men.

The enthusiasm with which the islanders welcome the opportunity for gathering together and meeting each other is shown by their whole-hearted support of those rare occasions which afford such opportunities. Browne observes in 1896 that the islanders had a marked tendency towards sociability - "With each other they are social, and given to joking and laughing. They are decidedly talkative, especially among themselves."

The routine of everyday life in 1957 was broken by three notable events taking place, the performance of a play in the church hall, an annual institution, produced by the priest, and participated in by the younger islanders, the "Mission" and the visit of the Accony football team to the island, all of which received enthusiastic support from the islanders.

The "Mission" was the series of masses and evening sermons, lasting for a whole week, delivered by a Redemptorist father visiting the island. It is an event that occurs every four years, and is welcomed, in spite of the difficulty incurred in combining farm work with a strict religious schedule, because of the chance it gives to the whole community to leave the house in the evening and to meet people. Many of the women expressed the wish that there could be a Mission more often since it gave them a chance to meet so many more people than they did usually, "You went to mass in the morning and then you had to go again at 8.30 and you never felt the time passing. Little as it was it was something to do - if only we could have films

once or twice a week," said a middle aged spinster who lives alone.

When the Accony team visited the island to play a match, most of the islanders, including many who hardly ever leave the house, came down to the Quay to watch and to welcome their mainland friends, many of whom came in with the team. Men, women and children came, sometimes a distance of several miles, to watch the match, the younger people of both sexes standing or sitting on the grass together, while the older men and women formed distinct and separate groups, some distance apart. After the match everyone expressed the view that such visits should take place more often and many said wistfully that the crowds of people at the Quay that day reminded them of the old days before emigration started to deplete the island. One girl of twenty told me "You wouldn't believe it but I was looking forward to that football match for weeks ahead."

With the exception of such rare events, there are three important mechanisms by which the islanders ensure that social interaction is maintained, even between people living in isolated and remote houses, who would otherwise meet very few people.

These three mechanisms are religion, dances and visiting. Probably the most important of these is religion, because participation in religious activities is obligatory. Every islander must take part, whether or not he or she is socially inclined, and consequently a greater number of people take part in religious activities than in more specifically social activities. The function of the "stations", of "rites de passage" and of the weekly attendance at Mass, in increasing social cohesion have been discussed in the previous chapter.

Although there are now so few houses on the island there are very few islanders who can claim to have visited all the sixty one houses. The circle of people within which one visits tends to be

restricted to five or six houses, and the only reason for going into the other houses is when the family concerned holds a dance or a wake. "The times you go into people's houses are for dances and funerals." Many people over forty have not yet been into at least ten or fifteen houses, and frequently more. One woman of forty five, living at the north, visited a house at the west for the first time in 1957, when she was invited to a station dance there. She had not been inside eight other houses, six of these houses being at the west, two at the east. Like most people, she was familiar with the houses in her own region. Wakes and dances, familiarise people with many houses which they would otherwise have no occasion to visit, being neither close neighbours, kin, nor special friends of the occupiers, and if it were not for this many people's knowledge of the way of life of other island families would be limited to the few houses in which they were regular visitors.

There are two kinds of dances, apart from the station dances already described, the weekly dance held in the church hall on Sunday evening, and the "house dances" which are held in the houses, from time to time. The weekly dance is attended only by the younger people, and a few of the middle aged men, music being provided by one or two of the melodeon players. In former times the dance was attended by fifty or more people, but now only a score or so go. People maintain that the dance in the hall is less "friendly" than the house dances, because "There's nobody there to care if you come or go." Girls will stop going to the dances in the hall when they reach the mid-twenties. An attractive girl of twenty eight has not been going for several years now. She says that she is too old and that if she did go no one would dance with her. This is in fact the case, since the men prefer to dance with young girls of sixteen or

seventeen rather than with the older girls.

Any form of amusements that take place have to be provided by the islanders' own efforts, which usually take the form of organising a house dance, a private dance, to which the whole island is welcome to come, and for which, unlike the station dance, no invitations are issued. The house dance is distinct from the station dance in that it is a purely secular event, and can be held at any time of the year, not only at set times. At one time there used to be a great many houses which held dances regularly, and in the summer season there were occasionally as many as four dances a week. In addition to this a big "porter dance", used to be held on New Year's Eve and on other special occasions. The men used to pay for a barrel of porter, and for the tea, sugar, butter and sweet cake, while every woman had to bring with her to the dance a cake of bread for the tea, each woman vying with the others to see who could make the nicest cake.

In recent years however there has been a drastic decline in the number of house dances held each year. For instance in 1956 and 1957 only five such dances were held altogether. The people blame the building of the hall in 1944 for this decline, and regret that it was built at all, since it has minimised the need for house dances. The only people who go to the weekly dances are the young and active ones who intend to dance, whereas at the house dances people will be able to meet each other and chat, and enjoy a meal, even if they cannot, or do not want to, dance.

The reason for holding a dance varies. It may be held simply to enliven the monotony of daily life, or more usually, in honour of a visiting kinsman, or as a farewell to an islander who is emigrating. It is regarded as an obligation incumbent upon kin to hold a dance for

A RUINED HOUSE AT THE NORTH.



On the right of the picture is a small area of wooded land, all that remains of the forest that once covered the island.

"friends", who return home on a visit after a long absence overseas, if these friends wish it, though many of the emigrants who return on holiday are too old to enjoy a dance.

In 1956 a dance was held in March as a farewell to the island doctor, by the family with whom she had been staying, and another in June in honour of a visiting "Yank", a girl of twenty one, by the mother's father, mother's brother and mother's sister, with whom she was staying. The third dance was given in August for a "Yank" on holiday after an absence of thirty years from the island, by his sister and her husband.

In 1957 a dance was held in July by a sister and brother to celebrate the visit of three of their sisters and a brother-in-law, from England, and another in August, as a farewell to a girl of sixteen emigrating to England. Apart from these dances, and the station dances, no other families held house dances during this period of 2 years.

The majority of the guests at the house dances are young people between 15 and 30 and a few of the older men. So keen are people not to miss a dance that many of them will travel several miles on a wet, windy night to attend one, often having to borrow dry clothes from the host or hostess when they arrive, because they have got so soaked with rain. Most women over thirty, whether married or single, do not attend dances. They would feel that to do so, unless they helped with the preparations for the tea at a kinswoman's house, and had a purpose in being there, would be undignified - "Dances are for the young people" middle-aged women say. The general opinion of house dances, as opposed to the station dances, which are attended by a mixed gathering of old and young is that, "The dances haven't been the same since the old people stopped going to them."

As at the station dance, "tea", a sit-down meal of bread, cake, buns and tea, is regarded as an essential part of the dance. Though a person can just "give the house", for the dance and need not provide the tea, there is a feeling that a dance cannot be a proper one unless it is accompanied by tea, and it is very rarely that this is not provided.

The house dance follows the same pattern as the station dance, the only difference being that there are no invitations, no hand-shaking at the beginning and end, and that the guests are composed chiefly of young people. The atmosphere, though gay, has none of the general air of enjoyment that characterises a station dance, and there is a marked difference in the way in which people regard the two. A house dance is just an enjoyable occasion, to which people will go if they feel inclined, whereas a station dance is a much discussed event, and people will be very disappointed if they do not receive an invitation to it.

Visiting is probably one of the most constant ways in which the islanders maintain contact with each other, keeping up social relations, in an attempt to counteract the rapid disintegration of their community life, brought about by the decline in population, emigration and by the resulting predominance in the community of middle-aged and elderly people. A significant aspect of the "nativistic movement" is the importance that the islanders attach to visiting, and the effort that they make to continue to do so, in spite of the continual decline in the population.

When an islandman has any spare time he is disinclined to spend it at home with the family, unless he is especially tired after a heavy day's work, or unless it is raining, when he will probably retire to bed. In the spring and summer, the busy period of the

farming year, the men work until the last scrap of daylight has disappeared, and are frequently too tired to go out in the evening. The nights are short and "There's no night in it for visiting", but in winter, during the long evenings, a great deal of visiting is done, people often visiting as many as three houses in a night.

Many men prefer to go out every night, either visiting or to the pub. One fifty year old man with five young children comes in from the fields to his supper, and still in his old patched clothes, leaves the house at about ten in the evening, almost every night, to return several hours later. Frequently he will merely go to the next village and spend four hours or so sitting in the house of his middle-aged spinster cousin, returning to his wife at three o'clock in the morning. He is extremely devoted to his wife, yet he refuses to spend an evening sitting at home with her. She does not resent being left alone in the house, "He likes to meet the boys and have a talk after working all day out at the bog by himself", she says. Men living alone especially, are likely to go visiting very frequently. One forty year old bachelor admitted that he had gone out visiting, or to the pub, almost every night for three years.

The manner in which men visit differs from that in which women do so, not only in frequency, the women visiting much more rarely than the men, but in the way in which their visiting habits tend to be more sociable. Men visit in groups as well as singly, whereas, if a woman does pay a visit, she prefers to go when she is sure there will be no other visitor in the house, so that she can exchange news of a personal nature with her hostess as well as general gossip. A woman will be annoyed if she pays a visit to a house and finds that some other woman is also paying a visit there,

and conversation will be very stilted, until one or the other of the visitors leaves, whereas a man, on finding other visitors in the house, would be ready to join in a general conversation, and would probably enjoy it more than being the only visitor.

There is a definite ritual about paying a visit, as opposed to just dropping in to make a friendly call on a neighbour, to borrow some sugar or flour and to have a few minutes chat. The right time to make a visit is considered to be between the meal at two o'clock and tea at five, and more especially after tea in the evening, when the woman of the house has washed up after tea in the evening, when the milking is done, and she is ready to receive a visitor. Often visitors do not arrive at the house until well after dark, especially in the summer when they will not arrive until ten or eleven o'clock, and will not leave until one or two o'clock next morning.

If a person does not want to receive visitors, he or she will close the kitchen door, which, whatever the weather, almost invariably remains open, to indicate that they are busy. The closed door is a sign that people understand, "I was going to visit you but I saw your door closed so I didn't come in," they say, and will often, having made a journey of a mile or more, turn back without paying a visit if they see, on approaching the house, that the door is closed.

When a visitor arrives he or she will be welcomed, with a handshake, if it is a long time since their last visit, and given a chair by the fire, where the family will also gather round, if it is evening and their work is finished. After an interval of about one or two hours conversation the hostess will fill the kettle and poke up the fire to boil the water for a cup of tea. She may, if she is

on good terms with the visitor, and does not feel any desire to impress, give the visitor a cup of tea, "in your hand", along with a slice or two of bread and jam, or sweet cake, or biscuits, if she has them. She may serve the tea on the table instead, especially if she does not know the visitor very well, or if he or she very rarely calls. If she does so she will put on a tablecloth to cover the oilcloth on which the family eats, take out the best delf, and do her best to make the tea table look attractive. If the cup of tea is "in the hand" then there is no need for the visitor to make any protestations, but if the hostess puts a cloth on the table and makes a meal of it he or she is expected to keep up a continual flow of protest during the preparations, "Look at the trouble you're going to," "You're going to too much trouble altogether" etc. to which the hostess will reply crossly, "Arra will you stop - if I was in your house don't I know well I'd be given tea?"

While the guest is eating, either alone, or more likely in the company of the hostess and other members of the family who feel inclined to have a cup of tea, the hostess keeps apologising for the poor quality of the food, no matter how good it may be, or how great an effort she has made to provide the best she has, "I'm thinking that's not a very nice tea - a pity you weren't here last week - I'd have had a bit of sweet cake for you then," "You don't like it - it's not nice - it's the flour, there's something the matter with it this time - that's the second bad bag I've got from the Quay, I'll get John to fetch the next lot from Curraun - I just can't make a good cake with it - I like a light cake, and that's real heavy." "I wish I had something nice to give you," etc. The guest is expected to respond with emphatic denials and praise of the food and the hostess will be very offended if he or she does not. When the meal is

finished the guest will thank the hostess before leaving the table by saying, "That was lovely," or, "Thanks, I enjoyed that."

Clare island etiquette demands that a person, however great their hurry, should not leave immediately after eating- "It's not the thing to wipe your mouth and leave at once," a bachelor explained to me. You are expected, whether partaking of tea at a wake, a dance or a visit, to wait at least an hour afterwards, unless you wish to be judged guilty of a breach of good manners. The period of waiting after tea is described as "making dacent," and people will say, accounting for their late arrival home after a visit, "I was just making a bit of dacency after the tea."

When the guest finally rises to take his leave, whatever the time happens to be, and even if he has outstayed his welcome by several hours, the host will look at the clock in feigned surprise and protest, "The night is young yet," or "What's your hurry? Aren't you soon enough?" The etiquette of visiting is an essential part of the visit, and sets the visit apart from the neighbourly call, and makes it a more significant social occasion.

The number of families with which the average individual is on visiting terms tends to be restricted, on the average, to about six houses. There is no general rule about which house a person can, or cannot, visit. In theory people are bound to visit their close kin, siblings, first and second cousins, and affinal relatives, as often as possible, especially if they are ill, lonely, or in difficulties, though, in practice, if they do not like these relatives, visits between them are likely to be few and far between. Other factors limit the frequency with which one visits such relatives- the distance one has to travel to do so, or the fact that the kin concerned refuse to reciprocate such visits. The area within which a woman visits is restricted by the fact that women do not as a rule ride bicycles, or horses, whereas the men

who do so, can travel longer distances on visits. Women consequently do not usually visit a house more than a mile away from their own home, unless for some special reason they are obliged to do so, when they will plan the visit several days ahead, and do the baking for that day on the previous day, so that they can take plenty of time over the visit. If they are paying a visit to a distant village, they will try to visit all the people with whom they are on friendly terms in this village, as well as the specific person they have come to see. If they do not do so such people will be hurt.

There is a feeling that visits should be reciprocal and frequently a refusal on the part of one person to reciprocate causes sufficient offence to prevent visits taking place between the people concerned. It is just as important to receive hospitality as to give it. A woman who constantly receives guests and is extremely hospitable yet never goes to visit, comes in for as much criticism as does the woman who constantly visits others yet makes them feel unwelcome if they pay a return visit to her.

Two women who are great friends have virtually stopped visiting each other because they live two miles apart and while A visits B because she can cycle, B cannot cycle and therefore cannot spare the time to visit A frequently. A resents the fact that B appears to be unwilling to visit her and rarely visits her now.

There are some houses which very rarely receive visitors because they refuse to welcome them when they come. People say "You wouldn't want to go into a house where you weren't welcomed."

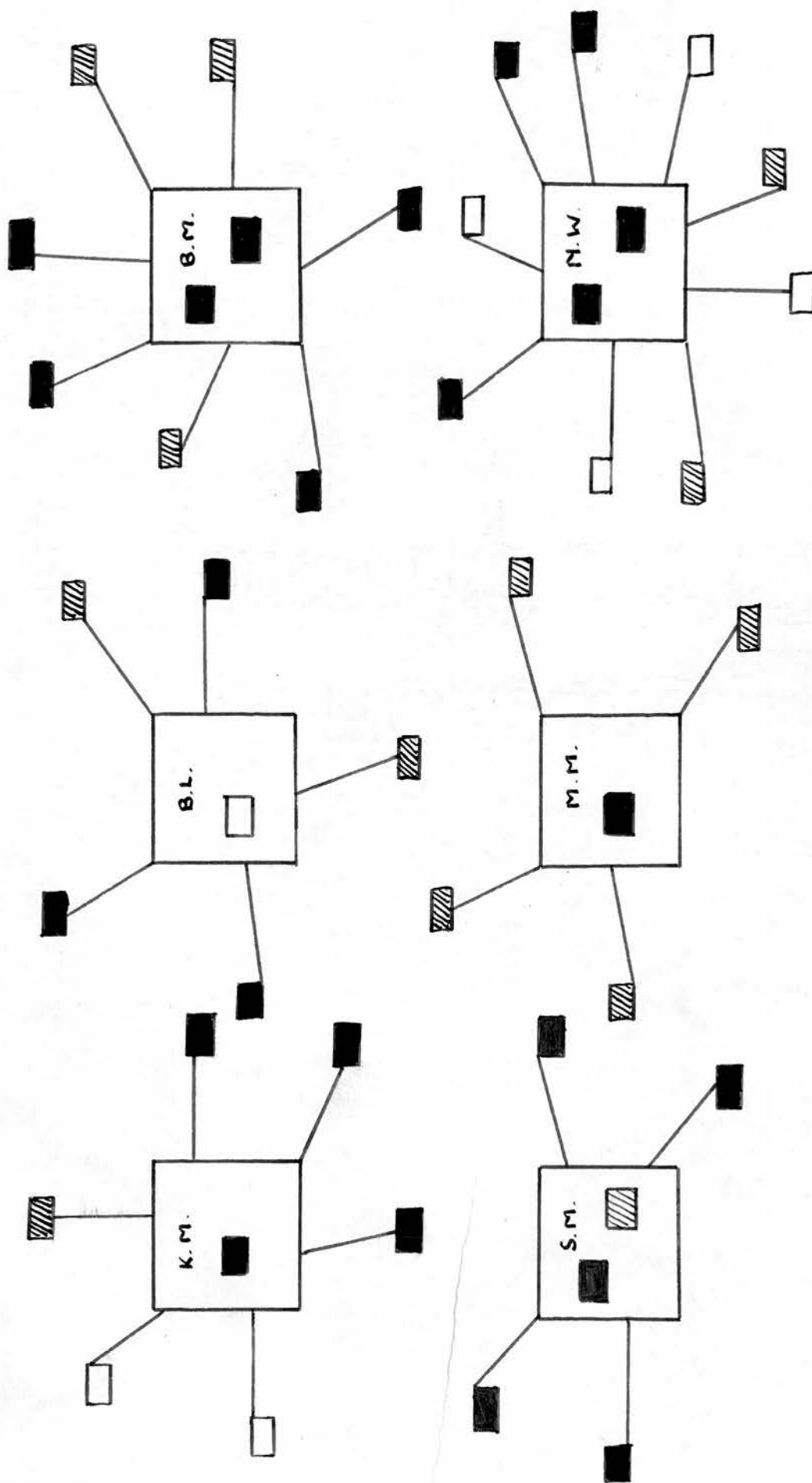
People are often very offended if a relative does not fulfil his kinship obligations by coming to visit them. K and A were very angry because their cousin over from England on a visit, did not

call to see them during her holiday on the plea that she had very little time, yet she visited some friends of hers, who were not related to her, on several occasions. "She's our cousin, and the Winters are nothing to her, but I suppose she thinks she'll get more amusement down there," they said crossly. When an emigrant returns on holiday, especially after a long period of absence, all those who are related, or who were friendly with him, are expected to call and pay a visit to him as soon as possible after his arrival.

People living in the same village as the returned emigrant, or people who once lived in the same village before marriage, are expected to make a courtesy visit, as are those who were at school together at the same time. A bachelor of fifty five announced his intention of going to see a married woman, home on a visit after twenty three years, "Because we were at school together," he said.

Most people, because of considerations of time or distance, limit the number of houses they visit to those of close kin, close neighbours and one or two personal friends. The table opposite affords some indication of the average woman's visiting circle, and the reasons for its limitations.

1. K.M. visits very much more often than the average woman. She visits on Sunday, on her way home from Mass, in the afternoon and evening, on her way to the Quay, at least once a week, and in the evenings. She has a bicycle and can visit houses all over the island because of this. The range within which she visits is consequently more extended than that of the woman who cannot cycle, and so cannot visit such distant houses.
2. B.L. visits her mother's brother once a week on her journey to the Quay to do the shopping. Apart from this she goes



INDICATES HOUSE INSIDE OWN VILLAGE.

KIN

NON-RELATED FRIENDS

AFFINAL KIN

TABLE INDICATING THE EXTENT OF

THE AVERAGE ISLAND WOMAN'S VISITING CIRCLE.

visiting on Sunday and one other evening a week as a rule, chiefly visiting houses within her own village and the next village.

3. B.M. is an unmarried woman acting as housekeeper to the teacher, who consequently cannot offer hospitality to visitors herself. She goes visiting approximately once a week, usually on a Sunday, chiefly to her brother or mother's brother, but combines it with short visits to neighbours in her brother's and uncle's village. She also visits extensively in her own village.
4. S.M. Here high status considerations limit the field within which visits take place, as does the fact that she can claim kinship only with one family on the island. She visits approximately once a week in her own village, kin and neighbours, approximately once a month to personal friends, and pays duty visits to an old widow in the next village, once a week.
5. M.M. She runs a visiting house - is unmarried and has very little time for visiting. She visits her cousin on her rare journeys to the Quay, and visits her other three cousins only in summer when her kin come home from England and stay there.
6. N.W. She has a wide circle of visiting houses as her three brothers are married on the island, but she only visits once every two or three weeks, chiefly her brothers.

There are several houses on the island which are known as "Visiting houses," where there is always a welcome and a cup of tea for anyone who calls, and where the atmosphere is one of informality.

In such a house one is almost sure, at almost any hour of the day, to find one or two people already there, talking, smoking, or even helping the woman of the house with such tasks as churning butter, sweeping the floor or weeding her flower garden. There are only four such houses on the island now, three on the road between the Quay and the Chapel, and one between the Chapel and the houses at the far west.

One is the home of the smith, his wife and six children, a hospitable house where the younger crowd tend to congregate in the evenings, especially in the winter, to play cards. Another is occupied by two brothers, a sister and their old mother. This is the house at which intelligent conversation is most likely to take place, and where the more serious minded of the islanders gather on winter evenings. The third is owned by a "girl" of forty five, who lives alone, and whose house is very near the chapel. People on their way to and from the chapel call in constantly, and many of the married men visit her in the evening to relax in the quiet house where there are no children, and to have a cup of tea. The western house, probably the most important of the "visiting houses", is occupied by a middle-aged brother and sister, both unmarried, who take a great pleasure in entertaining visitors and are extremely generous and hospitable.

On the whole women do not enjoy going to such visiting houses where groups congregate, and will avoid them, preferring to go to a house where they will be welcomed in a more personal way, and at the same time more formal way. The atmosphere of a visiting house is essentially informal - people wander in and out all day long, perhaps stopping for a cup of tea, perhaps only just pausing on their way to go fishing to ask for a drink of water. At the western

house for example, people come in without knocking or announcing their arrival in any way, and leave without a word or a gesture of leave taking. Neighbouring men working in the fields will come into the kitchen and without a word to the woman of the house, go up to the fire, pick out a hot coal with the tongs to light their pipe, perhaps address a word or two to any other visitors sitting there and go back to their work again, with as much familiarity as if they were in their own house. The western children all come in on their way home from school every evening just to see who is visiting there and to carry any news they can gather to take back to their gossip-starved parents. Neighbouring women drop in to ask for loans of salt, or flour, and stop for a cup of tea and a chat and maybe help the woman of the house to churn the butter or rinse her washing in the stream and spread it on the bank to dry.

In the evening the kitchen is full of visitors who just call in and make themselves at home, even when the owners of the house are out. The woman of the house says from the time the door opens in the morning till she and her brother are in bed at night visitors are in and out the whole time. Even if they happen to be out in the evening, he fishing and she milking, they are likely to come in to find as many as ten men sitting round the fire, all completely at home in the house, maybe even getting impatient at her absence and making themselves a cup of tea. Although she never visits herself because she cannot leave the house, she says she thoroughly enjoys having visitors and would be lonely without them.

On Sunday especially this house lives up to its reputation of being "The centre for tea at the west," since many of the western people call in there on their way home after mass. One man explained that this is the kind of house people just go in to on their way

home. Often they do not even speak to the brother, his sister or fellow visitors, but they just enjoy the company, and the feeling of being at home in another house besides their own.

It is through such institutions as visiting, and the house and station dances, that the social life of the island continues to flourish in spite of the decrease in population. Were it not for these activities the average family would be unlikely to meet any people other than their immediate neighbours, fellow villagers and kin. These institutions ensure that a person's field of social intercourse is extended to include more or less everyone in the community, and, because of the friendly relationships established by such activities, especially by the "station" and "house" dances, the social cohesion of the community can still be maintained in spite of the fact that there are so few people remaining on the island. The islanders' determination to continue these customs even when there are comparatively few people left to participate in them, shows how much importance they attach to them and the fact that they recognise them to be of significance to the successful functioning of community life. Their insistence on maintaining the customary forms of social interaction can, I postulate, be regarded as a conscious attempt to maintain social solidarity, and consequently, as part of the "nativistic movement," which is taking place on the island.

CHAPTER 16

NEIGHBOURS AND THE CHANGING ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN

Emigration has resulted in the continual decrease in the size of the community, and in the creation of two problems for the islanders. These are an acute shortage of male labour, and the prevalence of small families and incomplete families, caused by emigration and the lack of marriage.

These two factors have reduced the economic self-sufficiency of the family to such an extent that it is dependent on help from the neighbours and kin in the performance of the most important farming activities. The only way in which the community can maintain its former way of life in the face of this decline is through cooperation between neighbours and kin at all levels of everyday activity.

Each family knows that for carrying out many of the most important operations of the farming year they are dependent on the assistance of neighbours and kin, and this interdependence increases social solidarity, since no man can afford to ignore, or refuse to help, the man he may one day require help from himself.

The importance which the islanders attach to being on good terms with their neighbours and helping them is expressed in the value which is placed on being a good neighbour. A good neighbour is a person who will willingly put himself to great trouble to help you, an obliging person, who will have your interests at heart almost as much as he has his own, and most of all, someone in whom one can confide, without fear that they will gossip. As one woman said, she would far rather borrow salt, or other foodstuffs, from the neighbour who lives on the hill above her, than from her next door neighbour, because "That woman up above may have her faults, but if you tell her something it won't

be heard by anyone else no more than if you told it to the priest at Confession, " whereas the other woman, as soon as you had left the house, would be running round to some one else's house ridiculing you, saying your stocks were so low that you were always borrowing from other people.

A typical example of a "good neighbour" was Bridget, who, when her neighbour, an old spinster living alone, fell ill, used to call on her three or four times a day, to prepare meals for her, to make her fire, fetch her water, and to clean the house, without expecting any reward for doing so - "I'm no relation of hers at all you know, but I'm the nearest neighbour, and you wouldn't like to see her with no one to help her," she said. She is considered by everyone to be a very good neighbour.

It is regarded as very necessary to be on good terms with your neighbour - "If you were on bad terms with your neighbour, how would you live?" people ask. "It's a great thing to help each other - it's the right thing to do." "It's quite different from the town in here - here everyone's related and everyone is very neighbourly - if anyone is in trouble everyone gets to hear of it and goes to help them."

One woman expressed the feeling of obligation towards helping one's neighbours, when talking about a temporary shortage of turf last year because of the bad weather, "Even if you have a lot of turf yourself there are others who haven't any and you must take them a load - you can't let them go short."

Edwards¹ suggests that this obligation to share and cooperate has long been a characteristic of the Mayo peasant, quoting as an example the way in which, even during the Famine, when a farmer

1. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams. Op. cit.

slaughtered a beast his family would share the meat with other families - "They did not eat it aright without the neighbours being thankful," being an old Mayo expression, which shows the strong communal feeling that exists between the members of the peasant community. This communal feeling was probably made even stronger on Clare Island by the "rundale" village organisation, which encouraged habits of sharing and cooperation, which have now become ingrained in the island character.

In spite of their willingness to share and cooperate with each other whenever necessary, the islanders have little patience with people who make excessive demands on their time and resources, borrowing unnecessary items of equipment, and constantly demanding help when they have little need of it. One man, for instance, kept on asking his neighbour for the loan of her only ass, while he had three asses of his own, and she strongly resented this, though she did not refuse to lend it to him.

Two neighbours at the north are "not speaking". At one time there was a cordial relationship between the two bachelor brothers in the one house, and the old bachelor and his sister in the other, but it became increasingly non-reciprocal, the old man always asking favours of the brothers, and yet never giving anything in return. His demands became so excessive that the brothers decided the situation could continue no longer, and in order to save themselves the annoyance of having the old man in and out of their house asking for things every minute of the day, they decided to refuse to speak to him. For several years now these neighbours have not been on speaking terms; the brothers say there is no ill feeling on their side, but that it is simply a measure of self-defence against the old man's excessive demands. People agree that the brothers were right to

take this way out, by establishing an avoidance relationship, since the old man was behaving unreasonably, and not acting as a good neighbour should. "If he was next door to St. Peter himself he couldn't get on with him," they say.

As in most societies, the islanders are very conscious of the necessity for reciprocity in their relationships with neighbours. A gift, or loan may be made, but a return is always expected. Even after several years a man will remember that he owes, or is owed, a sum of money, a gift, or some work, though he will wait for the right opportunity to arise before he takes action. The return does not have to be made immediately, or within any given time, but it is tacitly understood that it will be made. For instance in farming activities help is often given on what appears to be a non-reciprocal basis. If a man lives alone his neighbours will help him at sheep shearing or harvest time, but if these neighbours have plenty of help themselves he will not help them in a similar way, since they do not need such help, but will wait until later for some opportunity to repay them for their kindness.

D. is helped to shear his large flock of sheep by his neighbours P. and M. M. lives alone and needs help with his own sheep shearing, which D. gives him. P. on the other hand, has a brother to help him, and very few sheep, so D. does not help him, but in the spring, when P. is preparing his fields for planting, since he has neither horse nor harrow, D. will lend him his, thus repaying him for his help of the summer before.

The custom, not only of making a deferred return of the debt, but often of making a return of a different nature, is demonstrated in the case of T. and M. When T's wife died in childbirth, leaving

no one to look after the child, M's sister, though she was neither a "friend" nor a close neighbour, offered to take the child and rear it. The child is now sixteen years old and as yet T. has not reciprocated in any way. Last year however, M. became involved in a serious dispute, and the very first person to come to his aid was T., whose support, because he is held in considerable esteem as an intelligent man and a wise judge of character, was a great help to M. People say he supported M., not because he was a friend of his but because he still remembers the debt he owes to M's sister for bringing up his daughter.

Similarly, when a woman returned from a visit to the mainland, bringing with her a currant loaf for her neighbour Maggie, she told her not to "insult" her by offering to pay for it. Maggie said to me "But I'll find a way of returning it somehow."

There is a custom of repaying people for a good turn they have done by "giving a day" of work, or sending a child to do jobs for one's creditor. One woman supplied another family with buttermilk for bread-making for several weeks, during the spring milk shortage, and in return, one of the sons of this family came to help her repair her fences.

A woman found a cheque for £25 lying in the road, and sent it back to the man who had lost it, expecting that, in return, he would send one of his young sons down to see if she had any work she needed help with, "But did he send the lad down to do a day's work for me? Not a bit of it - I never heard any more about it." She consequently regards him as a very poor neighbour.

D. lent T. six pounds when T. married five years ago, and since T. is not able to pay it back in cash, expects him to do so in work instead. Whenever D. needs help on the farm, at harvesting, for

instance, he will go to T.'s house early in the morning and ask him to come and help him. He is thought rather mean to insist on the full payment of the debt so relentlessly, especially as, by island standards, he is a wealthy man, and has no immediate need of the money.

One woman, Mary Ann, sums up the island attitude to reciprocity in her discussion of her relationships with her two next door neighbours, Nora and Katy. She dislikes both these women, Nora because she is mean, and Katy because she is a gossip, yet she cooperates constantly with them in lending foodstuffs, helping with household tasks and so on.

Nora is a widow, living alone, extremely miserly. She never makes the traditional "porter" and "boiled" cakes for Christmas, so Mary Ann always takes her up a quarter of each of her own two cakes, for Christmas day. She lends her food constantly, since Nora rarely goes to the Quay, and relies to a great extent on Mary Ann's generosity for her grocery supplies, "Mary Ann is my shop," she says. When she had no lime to whitewash her house in preparation for the visit of her husband's brother from the States she asked Mary Ann for some "Wasn't I the fool? I carried it up to her on my back - but I wouldn't mind that because I know how it is if you have somebody coming and you have no lime - I might be the same way myself," Mary Ann said.

When Nora had a cold Mary Ann used to fetch water for her every day and milked her cows twice a day, "I have three of my own to milk and her two, that's five and it's too many, and I didn't like doing it either I can tell you - I only did it out of charity and while I was needed she was as nice as anything to me, but now she's all right again I'm not wanted till the next time. I only go out to the mainland once a year, to Knock for a few days, and wouldn't you think that when

she knows I'm going she'd say, 'Here's the price of a pair of stockings' but devil a bit of it. She says when I come back, 'Well I never knew you'd gone dearie,' even if I told her only the day I was going, and she asks me, 'Did you bring anything back from Knock for me?' There's nothing in this world as cruel as ingratitude."

She explains why, in spite of her dislike for Nora, because of her meanness, she still helps her and behaves generously to her - "When Nora gets a cold and I milk her cows for her, I don't do it out of charity for Nora, because, as you know, Nora has no charity herself, I do it because I think that I might be struck down myself one night and might need help."

She compares Nora with Katy, "I will say that for Katy, whatever she gets she'll always run round and give you some of it and be delighted to do it. I was there in the house visiting and she sent down to the shop for a "Gateau" cake for my tea (a wrapped cake sometimes obtainable at the shop). I'd just as soon have had some of her bread, but that's like Katy - nothing is good enough for you. You'd be in Nora's house twenty years before she'd send down for a "Gateau" cake and another twenty years on top of that!"

In general the people with whom one cooperates most frequently tend to be one's next door neighbours, and those living opposite or nearby, usually in the two nearest houses, regardless of whether or not they happen to be members of one's own village. Here ties of neighbourhood outweigh village ties, the important criterion of whom one will cooperate with being the factor of proximity rather than membership of the same village.

Cooperation on Clare has three main functions:-

1. Cooperation in farming activities to counteract the small size of the average family and the shortage of male labour, and the consequent decline in the economic self-sufficiency of the family.
2. Cooperation in miscellaneous activities. The larger families help the smaller families, especially childless couples and celibates, by lending them their children to assist them whenever they need additional help in farming or household activities.
3. Cooperation in the lending of food and household equipment to counteract the difficulties of island life, such as temporary shortages of food and fuel. Cooperation in the performance of household tasks by women to counteract the difficulties which have resulted from the lack of young people in the average family.

With the shortage of male labour the only way in which many of the farmers can accomplish tasks requiring more than one person or can obtain assistance when ill, is through cooperation with kin and neighbours. Cooperation takes many forms - the lending of money, labour, equipment, animals, and because of the decreasing size of most of the island families, is fast becoming the only means whereby the island farmer can continue to work his farm at all.

Cooperation is especially important at three stages of the farming year, the harrowing of oats, sheep shearing and dipping, and the harvest. Few farmers can carry out the operation of harrowing alone, chiefly because few have the requisite equipment. Only about one man in every village owns a harrow, which he will lend willingly to those who need it, and some men also need to borrow a horse from

their neighbour, since an ass cannot be used for pulling the heavy wooden harrow. Two men are needed, one to lead the horse, and the other to steer the harrow, and men farming their land alone will have to ask a neighbour to help. An example of the way in which neighbours cooperate by lending each other both equipment and labour during the major operations of the farming year is shown by the cooperation in harrowing between eight farmers in Kille and Gurteen.

	<u>Harrow</u>	<u>Horse</u>	<u>Labour</u>
1.	own	neighbour's	son
2.	neighbour's	own	neighbour
3.	neighbour's	own	neighbour
4.	neighbour's	own	son
5.	neighbour's	neighbour's	neighbour
6.	neighbour's	own	neighbour
7.	own	own	sons
8.	neighbour's	own	sons

At harvest most farmers are able to complete the cutting and drying of oats and hay with the help of their own wives and children, without asking for help from neighbours, but they will require help when the time comes to build the hay into a rick. "Reeking" is the one part of the harvest that requires neighbour cooperation. A man will get one or two neighbours, depending on the male labour resources of his own family, to help him to collect the "cocks" of hay from the fields and make them into a large pointed roofed rick near the house, which will be thatched with rushes and fastened securely with ropes of twisted straw. As soon as a man has his hay ready for reeking his neighbours, even if they have not yet finished cutting their own hay, will "give him a day" and when they need his help, in a few days' time, he will be ready to give it in return.

An old bachelor living alone, sheared his sheep later than most people, and, instead of putting his fleeces in the barn, left them out in the open so that they got soaked in a storm. When the wool buyers came to the island he was very worried because he knew that he would not be able to sell the fleeces until they were dry. His two young neighbours, hearing about this, suggested that he should spread them on a stone wall to dry, and helped him to do so, and he was able to sell them after all.

Neighbours take a great interest in each other's affairs and will watch over each other's property with almost as much enthusiasm as they watch over their own. For instance T., passing M's house, noticed that her cow had got into her potato field and was damaging the crops. T. and M. do not like each other but instead of taking no interest in M's affairs and letting the cow do as much damage as it liked, T. stood outside her house (into which he did not dare to come as he was not likely to be welcomed) and shouted to her to come out and save her crops, persisting for several minutes until she heard him and came out.

People who have several children are expected to send them to help childless or celibate neighbours whenever they need help; a person will just ask a neighbour's child for help as he is passing on his way home from school. Children will be asked to post letters, to make purchases for neighbours at the Quay, or to stop and help with the hay. They receive very little reward for such errands, often nothing at all, or perhaps a penny or two for sweets. The older islanders regard anyone's children as potential helpers and messengers. A child is expected to make himself useful when needed, not only to his own parents and kin, but to his neighbours, and in fact to any islander who may need his help. They will be used to

run errands, asked to carry water, help with the milking, with such tasks as whitewashing the house, and in times of emergency will be sent to stay with childless or celibate neighbours who need company. The attitude to children is that they are there to be used, regardless of whether they are one's own or not. "I wouldn't thank a kid for running a message for me - they have nothing else to do - that's what kids are for," says a spinster of thirty four, who rarely goes to the Quay herself, as she is too busy keeping house for her two bachelor brothers, one an invalid, and her old mother, and who sends the neighbours' children on constant errands to the Quay.

The help that they receive from neighbours and especially from neighbour's children, makes it possible for many islanders living alone, ill or old, to maintain their independent way of life, since without this occasional help they would be unable to continue living alone and would either have to move into the house of an island kinsman, or leave the island altogether.

Cooperation is not only limited to economic activities and to the assistance given to the small, childless family, or to celibates, but takes many other forms. The loan of household equipment, such as ladders to whitewash the houses in spring, foodstuffs and turf at times of temporary shortages, the help given in illness or emergencies, at the performance of such major operations as putting a new roof on a house, are all forms of neighbour cooperation employed constantly to counteract the present difficulties of island life.

Because of the difficulties of communication with the mainland, especially in the winter months, the shop is likely to be without supplies of certain necessities for several weeks at a time. When flour, oil or sugar, or any other essential is in short supply kin

and neighbours will help each other - as one woman said, "You know how it is when you're short, the neighbours get to know and they send you some."

People do not hesitate to ask for whatever they need, though they will do so in an indirect way. They will come to the house and enquire first about the neighbour's health, about the neighbour's crops, is everything going well? Is the neighbour well supplied with the necessities of life? then they will say in a casual tone, "I can't see anyone going down to the Quay and I'm out of cigarettes - you wouldn't have any I suppose," or "Do you know I'm without a drop of paraffin oil till John goes down to the Quay again, and we can't light the lamp." "Has your daddy been sowing barley? He has! I wonder now, do you know if he has any left over?"

People will go long distances to borrow half a pint of methylated spirit to prime the Tilley lamp, from a neighbour, who may only have a pint himself, yet will share it willingly. Similarly those who own curraghs shop for those who do not when they make a trip to the mainland or to Achill. Those who have rhubarb in their gardens will take their neighbours a bunch just as soon as they have enough and the neighbour will reciprocate with marigold plants, a few onions or, in the early spring, with milk.

In February, March, April and May many people have no milk at all for tea, for making butter, and consequently no buttermilk for making bread, because they are waiting for their cows to calve. Anyone who is short will receive a small amount from everyone who can spare it. "When someone is short of milk the people of the village all help and send some," says one woman, who has plenty of milk herself, yet only keeps back enough for the family tea, makes her bread with water, and goes without butter in order to

give away the rest to neighbours who have none, even for their tea. She says it just depends on whose cow happens to calve first. It might be anyone's and you are as likely to be short one year as your neighbour was the last and consequently cooperation is essential. Without such cooperation many people would have no milk at all for several weeks. One woman said that her family was without milk for two months waiting for the cow to calve, and during this time they were supplied with milk by three neighbours and had as much milk as if they had their own cow, "We were very lucky, everyone just told us to ask whenever we wanted it."

This willingness to deprive oneself in order to help one's neighbours even to the extent of eating bread without butter, made with water instead of buttermilk, is typical of the islanders' reaction to a neighbour who is in need.

A woman who had to go into hospital left her bachelor son alone in the house for several weeks, during which time a next-door neighbour came in to clean the house and bake him cakes of bread; a man caught a pollack and his sister took a large piece to each of her next door neighbours; a man climbed on to the roof of his neighbour's house to whitewash the central chimney for her since she couldn't do it herself; a sick man lived alone - his roof fell in on top of him, and all the men of the village combined to put a new roof on that evening; another lost his curragh in a storm and his neighbour lent him his each day so that he could continue lobster fishing for the rest of the season - such instances are typical of the extent and variety of the cooperation that is continually being carried out between neighbours.

One of the most striking examples of mutual aid which took place recently was when C. and his wife K. replaced their thatched

roof with a slate one. K. is not popular because she has the reputation of being a malicious gossip, but C. is a pleasant man who is considered to be "very obliging" to his neighbours, especially in tending sick cattle. Consequently there were many people all over the island, not only from his own village, who wanted to repay him for his services by helping him with his roof. During the operation he and his family could not live in the house, so moved into the house of the next door neighbours, a widow and her son, both of whom disliked K., but for C.'s sake allowed the family to occupy part of their house for three weeks, until the roof was completed. During this period there were usually ten men at work on the roof most of the time, the carpenters being paid for their services, and the rest of the men "giving a day". A great many men gave a Sunday, the one day of rest in the week, the sacrifice of which shows the force of the feeling of obligation to one's neighbour, and to someone who has done you a good turn. In return C. was expected to provide his helpers with three meals of bread, tea and eggs every day, cooked by K. in the neighbour's house.

The obligations to neighbours are like those to kin, such that one cannot easily refuse a request made by a neighbour. One woman with very little work to do, asked Nora, from another village, to bake her two "porter" cakes to send to kin in England. She was a poor cook herself and asked Nora because she was a good cook. Nora had a large family of children and very little spare time, and resented this request. I asked her why she did not refuse to bake the cakes. She replied that she was afraid of "crossing" the woman, and by doing so, making herself appear mean, when the other woman told everyone she had refused.

Though fear of public opinion is probably an underlying sanction

in enforcing mutual aid in some cases, such as this one, it is not necessary in the majority of cases, where the request is recognized as a genuine call for help, and where people will not refuse to answer it. They do so, not only out of kindheartedness, but because they realise that in doing so they are ensuring that if they themselves need help later it is more likely to be given to them by people who owe them a service rather than by people they have refused to help. As the self-sufficiency of the family continues to decline so the cooperation between neighbours increases as the islanders attempt to counteract the problems created by the shortage of male labour, and by the small size of the island families. The way in which they have reacted to the present difficulties of island life, their willingness to assist each other in every way, represents an adjustment to the decline in the population, and to the problems which this has created for those with small families, and especially for old couples and celibates living alone.

To balance the radical change that the decline in population has caused in the pattern of island life, there has had to be, in addition to an increase in cooperation between neighbours, a corresponding change in the island attitudes towards the division of labour and to the traditional roles of men and women.

As in most societies there is a clearly defined difference in the respective roles of men and women, and a sexual division of labour which, because of the attitude of the society towards it, makes certain tasks that are performed traditionally by one sex, virtually taboo to the opposite sex.

It has already been shown that the island women are much more restricted socially than the men, that they are confined to the house to a greater extent, and that their opportunities for visiting

the mainland are fewer than those of the men.

As in most societies with a low level of technological development the woman's work is as hard, if not harder, than that of the men. The day is a long one for the men, in spring and summer, since they will often work for twelve hours a day in the fields or at the bog, stopping only when darkness falls. The women are at work for as long, often longer, than the men, but they are confined much more to the house, and its immediate surroundings, and their work is more monotonous. They often complain how unsatisfactory their work seems compared to the men's. "You can never see that you've done - it's the same thing over and again every day - it's different for the men, they are out planting and seeing the shoots come up."

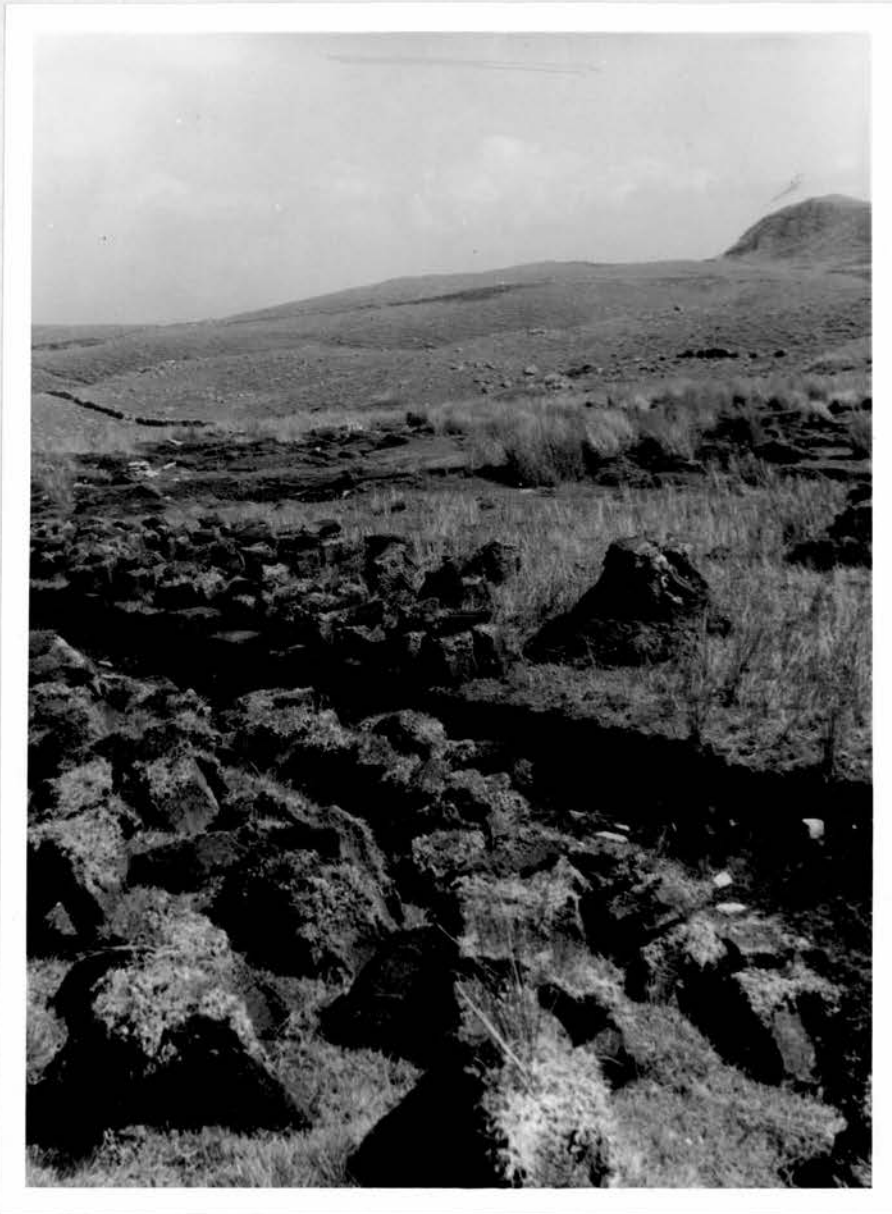
The chief task of the island housewife is that of any other housewife, to feed her husband and family. This, where all the cooking has to be done over an open turf fire, summer and winter, where there is an almost constant lack of meat, fish, vegetables and fruit, and where the men need a great deal of sustenance because of the heavy manual labour they engage in, is by no means an easy task. Meals are eaten three times a day, breakfast at about 8.30, lunch at about 12-2, and tea at any time from five onwards, according to when the men come in from the fields and want to eat. The staple food at every meal is a large cake of home made bread, soda, wholemeal or sometimes sweet with currants. The cake is circular in shape, about three inches thick, and twelve to fourteen inches in diameter, and a hungry man can eat half such a loaf at a sitting. A family of six, composed of two working men, and a housewife and three children, consume four or five cakes every day. Consequently the most important task in a woman's day is the baking

of bread. Women take great pride in their skill at baking, and often refuse to eat anyone's bread except their own. Most families have an individual preference for a particular type of cake, thin and crusty with very little soft centre, or high and fluffy, and the woman of the house will bake all her cakes to this particular specification.

Cakes are baked in an "oven", a large circular iron pan with a lid, placed on a hook over the fire, the cake inside, and pieces of red hot turf heaped on the lid. During the baking the fire needs constant attention and building up to maintain a high temperature, and every now and again fresh "coals" are placed on the lid. Since only one cake can be baked at a time, and since each takes $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours to bake, the average woman with four or five to bake each day, is kept by the kitchen fire for about six hours every day, with the exception of Sundays, when she will try to avoid baking, having baked twice as much as usual on Saturday. "There's no time to put a stitch in the children's clothes - what harm! the baking is cruel, but it must be done." Lifting the heavy oven and bending over the hot fire makes the baking of bread a tiring task, and one which most women dislike. Girls are taught to bake bread by their mothers as soon as they are strong enough to lift the heavy oven on and off the fire, and girls of twelve and thirteen are often as proficient at baking as their mothers.

The housewife must also be responsible for feeding the calves and chickens, churning butter, doing the family wash and in general maintaining the upkeep of the house. When she has any free time she will help in the lighter work in the fields, especially during planting and harvest time. Many women enjoy the opportunity of getting out of the house for a few hours and welcome the chance to

TURF BOGS.



Scraw, or "hairy", turf stacked into "feet" to dry before being placed in a stack for the winter.

Making the turf into "feet" is traditionally regarded as women's work.

work in the fields. They enjoy too the days that they spend "saving" the turf. After the men have cut the turf the women and children are responsible for building it into small heaps to dry and later transporting it on asses to the hillock where the turf stack will be made. The putting of the turf into the stack is a man's job and they will not allow the women to do it, believing that they cannot do it properly. The women enjoy working at the bog on a fine summer's day, picnicking with their neighbours, and meeting women from other villages, whose bogs are adjacent to their own. The few days spent "at the turf" are regarded as a pleasant interlude from the monotony of everyday routine and even busy women with large families of young children will try to spend one or two days saving turf. As one woman said, "I love the turf - it's a kind of hobby".

Generally speaking the women are hard working and have a very high standard of cleanliness in the house. A strong positive value is set on being a good housekeeper, and women who have the reputation of being lazy or untidy are regarded with disfavour. A bachelor of forty, talking about an old woman of seventy in the next village who is universally condemned for spending all her time visiting, and begging cigarettes, while her own house is in a state of chaos, and her son has to cook his own meals if he wants to eat at all, has this to say, "Isn't M. an awful son to let her make a show of herself like that? If my mother was like that I wouldn't let her go out of the house until she had it neat and clean again."

Old women are as reluctant as old men to retire from work. One man says that when his sister occasionally goes visiting, his old mother, who no longer does any work in the house, is delighted to have the opportunity of getting tea for her sons, "It's hard when

you've been used to doing everything round the house to have it all taken away from you," he explained.

It is an interesting fact that the women on Clare Island are accorded equal status to the men; this equal status is manifested in two ways, both by the personal relationship between husband and wife, and by the way in which they share the economic responsibility. When the man of the house arrives home after a hard day's work it is not he who sits in the easy chair by the fire, but his wife, while he sits on a hard wooden one. This may merely be a recognition of the women's superiority in the home, or it may be a tacit recognition by the men that their wives work as hard as they do. The wife too usually has control of the family finances, paying any household bills that must be met, and it is not infrequently that a man asks his wife for money to go to the pub in the evening. (This is not the case when brother and sister live together, when the brother usually has full control of the money.) It is usual too for the women to write any letters that have to be written. One woman said of her husband, "He's always left all the writing of letters to me - though he's well able to do it - he's a better hand at it than I am."

Until recently the roles of men and women have been clearly defined, it being understood that a woman must run the house, bake, feed the family, milk, and so on, while the man works at the fields or at the bogs. While a man, or woman, might occasionally help his wife, or husband, in cases of illness, with their own tasks, there was, and still is, a firm belief among many of the islanders, that certain jobs are associated with one sex, and that the performance of them should be restricted to this sex alone. A woman, for instance, is not expected to work at digging in the potato

fields, harrowing, cutting, or stacking turf, or shearing sheep. These are regarded as men's jobs, and women should not interfere in them. Similarly a man is not expected to bake, wash clothes, fetch water from the spring or river, or to milk the cows, and such jobs are regarded as virtually taboo for a man. There has, however, in recent years been a tendency for the roles of men and woman to become less distinct, and for the division of labour to become less rigid.

Because of the lack of marriages in recent years, and the way in which families have been depleted by emigration, many families are now reduced to a state where they lack either an able bodied man, or an able bodied woman, under sixty. Such families can be regarded as "incomplete" in the sense that they have a deficiency in either male or female labour in the household. Of the sixty one houses on the island only 32 have able bodied people of both sexes under sixty, while the remaining twenty nine are without one, or both. This means that these 29 families have either no men, or no women in the house at all, or that those men and women are likely to be old and perhaps incapable of carrying out their normal duties. Such a situation obviously implies that the members of these families must be able to take over the role of the sex that is absent. For instance, if two brothers are living together, they must be prepared to carry out the work of a woman as well as their own work.

The present situation is summed up in the following table:-

Houses with no women at all	10
Houses with no women under sixty	13
Houses with one or more able women under sixty	38
Houses with no men at all	5
Houses with no men under sixty	6
Houses with one or more able men under sixty	50

In 16.4% of the island houses there are no women at all; in 21.3% all the women are over sixty, and, if not incapable, likely soon to be unable to carry out so many of their duties. This means that in slightly more than a third (37.7%) of the houses the men are faced with a chronic shortage of female labour, in ten cases having no choice but to take over the women's duties themselves, or to marry, and in thirteen cases helping the aged woman of the house and facing the prospect of taking over her duties when she dies or becomes incapable of work. The situation for the island women is less serious, since only 18.1% of the houses are faced with a corresponding absence of male labour. As a result it has been necessary for the men, to a greater extent than the women, to adapt themselves to changing conditions.

In the face of such a situation there are three possible solutions which could be applied to obviate the difficulties:-

- 1) Marriage should take place in such families.
- 2) There should be a less rigid division of labour, men and women adapting themselves to the roles of the other sex when necessary.
- 3) Houses which lack able bodied men should cooperate with those that lack able bodied women.

As has been shown in previous chapters, the islanders show little inclination for marriage now, and there is at present only one instance in which the problem has been solved by cooperation between two "incomplete" families.

This is the case of two families, next door neighbours, whose houses are atypical in being very close to each other, separated by a distance of only a few yards. House A is occupied by two young bachelor brothers of 28 and 30, while house B is occupied by a

middle aged widow, her husband's sister, her two daughters of 20 and 24 and her young son of 14, as yet incapable of much work on the land. These two families, one with no women, one with no men, have developed a system by which they help each other, instead of the men attempting women's duties and the women men's. The brothers do all their own farm work, and in addition they do all the heavy work such as cutting turf, digging, cutting hay and oats and sheep shearing, for the women in the neighbouring house. In return the women, in addition to running their own house, and helping with the lighter work on both farms, such as saving hay and turf, and spreading manure on the fields, do all the washing and mending of clothes for the two brothers, churn their butter and bake the bread. When the brothers hold a station dance the girls prepare the tea for them and act as hostesses. These two families have entered into a relationship of mutual help, and in doing so, neither men nor women have had to adjust themselves to the role of the opposite sex, as they would otherwise have had to do.

Such a relationship is however atypical, probably because most houses are situated too far away from each other to make such close interaction between them possible. The islanders have attempted to solve the problem of the "incomplete" family rather by a process of adjustment and adaptation and by a willingness to abandon the old division of labour now that, in many cases, it is no longer practical to maintain it.

Until recently it was thought of as unnatural for a man to do any work associated with a woman, and, to a lesser extent, for a woman to do any work associated with a man. One man summed up the island attitude towards this when discussing how, after working for some time alongside women in the potato fields in Scotland, his

attitude towards women changed and he lost his respect for them. "After I'd been working with them a little while I couldn't help it - it makes you lose your respect for girls somehow, and when you do that there's not much good in life."

Though the division of labour is waived today in situations where it is necessary, in "incomplete" families, it still continues to operate in "complete" households. A boy who is forced by his mother to do women's work such as fetching water or milking would be regarded as a "nancy boy," the subject of jokes and ridicule. A woman told me that her son of eight would "feel ashamed" if asked to do jobs for her in the house, and would probably refuse. A man with a large family of children, who likes nothing better than sitting by the fire in the company of women, talking about women's affairs, is regarded by both sexes with scorn.

Milking especially is regarded as a woman's job and many men do not know how to milk, or even if they do, will refuse to do so, feeling that if anyone should pass by the barn and see them doing so they would be ridiculed. One man told me that he never had any idea how to milk until he left the island at the age of 27 and went to work on a farm, in America, where he was expected to milk. Since his return to the island he helps his wife to milk and feels no shame in doing so, "How it is here there's a lot of people that reckons it's a disgrace for a man to be seen milking - they reckon milking is a woman's job," he explained.

It is only when men take over women's tasks when there is a woman in the house able to do so that they are regarded with scorn. In situations where it is necessary for them to do so they are regarded with admiration (The assumption of men's roles by women living in "incomplete" families is of less importance since the

women in such families are in sufficiently secure positions, owing to legacies from America, widow's pensions etc. for them to have no need to grow crops in order to make a living, whereas men living alone must still wash and cook for themselves).

The general rule, in a purely masculine household, is for one of the men, usually the weaker of the two, to devote most of his time to running the house, baking the bread, milking and so on, and to give occasional help in the fields to his brother, father or son, while the stronger man continues with his normal work in the fields and does not attempt to do much work in the house.

Though men feel that it is an indignity to be asked to do a woman's task when a woman is there to do it, and will laugh at any man who does so, yet when they realise that it is necessary for them to master a woman's skills they do so willingly, and take a great pride in their housekeeping, and show a complete absence of embarrassment at taking over the woman's role.

It is especially in the baking of bread that men living alone take a great interest and pride. Most men living alone are very knowledgeable about baking and were very willing to give me advice on how to make a good cake, telling me their own secrets for achieving perfect results. A bachelor of 55 bakes the bread for his old mother, pours tea for visitors and sweeps the kitchen floor while she sits and smokes by the fire. A bachelor of 40 who is always ridiculing women and has the reputation of being a woman hater, occasionally has to bake when his old mother is ill and admits that his cakes turned out well, "I've watched the women doing it," he explained. One islandman who emigrated to America astonished his two daughters many years later by showing them how to bake a cake, an accomplishment he had learned many years ago on

the island, while keeping house for his widowed father.

A sixty year old bachelor, living with his brother, is always boasting of the quality of his bread, how he can bake better than any woman on the island and how he wants no woman in his kitchen. "I'm a very good hand at making a cake you know - did people tell you? There's some women who may be very good cooks but who just can't make a good cake. The very first cake I ever made turned out a success. I think you're born to it. Some people can never do it however many books they read. You don't want to thump it too much - "kneading it" they call it, and you shouldn't lift the lid off the oven while it's cooking, because that lets out the steam - you should time it. Not everyone can make cakes well - it's something you're born to, like bone setting. It's like that with a man who can attract a lot of women, that's a gift too," he added. His friends who visit him praise his bread and say it compares favourably with any woman's. Another bachelor living with his sister said cynically, "That's all very well, but if every man was like him there soon wouldn't be much to bake with, or much to cook either," because such men, who spend all their time pottering round the house baking never have the time to grow many crops.

The willingness with which the islandmen adapt themselves to a shortage of female labour and assume the women's roles when necessary is illustrated by the case of a bachelor of 75, living with his 80 year old sister. He had never done any work in the house at all, but one day his sister fell ill, and had to spend several weeks in bed. A neighbour called to see how the old couple were managing and was surprised to be offered homemade bread and tea by the old man, who had never tried to make a cake before, but had willingly taken over his sister's work in an emergency. (The neighbour added

that the bread was by no means a success).

In spite of the way in which men adapt themselves successfully to women's roles when necessary and in spite of the admiration people have for such men, at the same time women feel that there is something unnatural about a man doing so. They say a man living on his own cannot keep a house as clean as a woman can, since it is not his kind of work. They maintain that if a woman was working in the fields she might do her very best but she could never do as much as a man even so, because it is not her kind of work, and it is the same with a man attempting to run a house.

One woman explains this feeling when she talks of her widowed brother who runs the house for himself and his son, while his son works in the fields. At one time, when she and he were living alone together, he would never give her any help at all in the house, and was always working on the land, or drinking at the pub, or fishing, but when his wife became an invalid he helped her in the house, and became so domesticated that when she died he was able to take over her work. He never does an hour's work on the land, but stays in the house all day like a woman, baking and cleaning, and again like a woman, rarely goes visiting. "He bakes the best bread I've ever tasted - it's as white as loaf (shop bread) but still somehow I wouldn't like to eat it (a lot of women feel this way about eating bread baked by men - "He says his bread's as good as any woman's but still you wouldn't like to eat it," they say)- "It's funny to see him like that. When he was living with me he would never even bring in a pail of water even if you were dying for the want of it, and I had four or five cows for milking at the time and no one to help me, but I would never think of asking him - it wasn't

what we would call men's work, it wasn't the right work for a man and you wouldn't expect him to do it," she explained.

There is no shame attached to doing a woman's work when necessary but the woman who tries to make her husband do her work for her, and the husbands who does so, are regarded as ridiculous. One woman with very little work to do gets her husband to milk, fetch water, and will call him in from his work in the fields, if he is not in the house, to lift the heavy oven on and off the fire when she is baking. A bachelor comments on this - "She has him spoilt (ruined) I know if I had a wife who couldn't lift a pot from the fire I'd soon have her outside the door (send her packing) - sure any woman should be able to lift an ould pot from the fire."

The attitude that men adopt to women's work when necessary is not peculiar to Clare, but to other areas in the west of Ireland, such as Valentia Island, where the men also bake bread and keep their houses spotlessly clean, when they are compelled to live without women. Like the "sour doughs" of the Yukon, forced to make their own bread, and mend their own clothes, because no women would venture out with them, the islandmen of the west have made this cultural adjustment. Their attitude represents an adaptation to the situation created by the decline in marriage, and by the shortage of women brought about by emigration (though approximately equal numbers of men and women emigrate it is the men, on Clare and other western islands, who tend to return again, whereas the women, once having emigrated, remain overseas. This means that in effect, more women than men emigrate) and to the consequent necessity of being obliged to live alone, or with no female help apart from that of an old mother or invalid sister.

GOING TO FETCH TURF.



The ass is harnessed with wooden "cleeves", into which the turf is loaded. In the background is the twelfth century abbey in which Granuaile O'Malley is reputed to be buried, and beyond this is the chapel.

The readiness with which the islandmen adapt themselves to the absence of women tends to minimise the need for marriage, since, if a man can assume a woman's role with comparative ease he has no need to marry for the purely practical purpose of acquiring a housekeeper. Similarly, if two men live together they provide each other with company, and unless either of them feels a strong sexual urge to marry they will be reluctant to spoil the peaceful nature of the home by bringing a woman into it to disrupt their life. One woman says of her a nephew, a bachelor, living with his widowed father, that he will never marry until the father dies, "Why should he? Those two are far too comfortable as they are."

The decline in population has not only necessitated an increase in neighbour cooperation, and a relaxation of the strict division of labour, to counteract the problems it has created for those living in "incomplete" families, or small families with few labour resources, but it has also necessitated an adaptation to the virtual disappearance of specialist craftsmen. Whereas in former times they would tend to leave specialised work to specialists in that particular field, nowadays, because of the dearth of such people, the islanders are prepared to do any such jobs themselves.

There are very few tasks, formerly reserved for specialists, which the islanders ~~to~~ today are not capable of performing themselves. Most men make the furniture for their houses, do any necessary repairs and maintenance, and are virtually independent of specialists, though occasionally one of the four skilled carpenters will be called in, if he can spare time from his farm, to perform some exceptionally difficult task.

The islanders have reacted to the present difficulties of life on the island by adjusting themselves to the changing situation.

They have counteracted the problems which might have arisen by increasing cooperation in all forms of economic and household activity between neighbours, and by disregarding the traditional attitude towards the division of labour, adapting themselves when necessary, to roles traditionally associated almost exclusively with the opposite sex. The reaction to the dearth of specialists has been the same, a refusal to allow the disappearance of specialist craftsmen to disrupt the community, by each man becoming his own specialist.

It is especially in their changing attitude towards the traditional roles of men and women that the islanders show the extent to which they are willing to adjust and adapt themselves to changing conditions rather than to allow the society to disintegrate. Though there is a strong feeling that it is unnatural for a man to do women's work, or for a woman to do men's, an attitude shown by the indignity people feel when asked, unnecessarily, to do jobs associated with the opposite sex, and in the way women feel reluctant to eat bread baked by men, though it is often as good, or better to eat than their own, when necessary the islanders disregard this division of labour, in order that the society should not disintegrate. In a situation where, with the shortage of one sex to carry out its normal tasks and with the refusal of the other sex to do so, a state of disequilibrium and disphoria could result, the islanders attempt to avert this by making adaptations to their old patterns of culture.

It has been necessary for the men to make this adjustment and adaptation to changing conditions to a greater extent than the women, since the shortage of women in the island families is greater than that of men. That they are willing to do so indicates to what lengths they are ready to go to ensure the survival of the island culture,

even to the extent of sacrificing their traditional masculine roles. That they choose to solve the difficulties in this way, rather than by marrying, indicates more clearly than anything else, the attitude towards marriage on Clare Island.

CHAPTER 17.

CONCLUSION

In making a study of the social relations in a dying society it is possible to examine the way in which the members of this society react to the threat of extinction. Do they regard the future with pessimism and the present with apathy, or do they attempt to infuse new life into the dying culture by making conscious efforts to ensure the cohesion of the community, while a radical change is being created in their traditional way of life by continuous and rapid depopulation?

Clare is an island which has all the indications of being a dying community; a steady drift away from the community by the young people in search of a higher standard of living; a rapid decline in population; a shortage of people in the 20-40 age group, and a predominance of aged people (38% of the total population on Clare are over fifty years old; a lack of marriage and consequently of young children to replace those dying or emigrating; small, incomplete families, and a lack of social life.

The decline of the island is most apparent in the attitude of the people themselves, an attitude of pessimism about the future of the island, because the majority of them recognise that the island is dying, and in some cases, where people are kept on the island by kinship obligations, strong feelings of resentment at being kept on the island against their will.

The principal factors which have led to the decline in population are the increasing tendency to emigrate, and the decreasing tendency to marry. These have in turn affected the social organisation because they have led to a decrease in the size and self-sufficiency

of the average family and to the increase of small incomplete families. The average Clare Island family is no longer economically self-sufficient and is dependent for help constantly on neighbours and kin, and at the same time this shortage of man power has led to a decline in the social life, since those remaining islanders are too preoccupied with farm and household duties to participate in social activities.

Because of the decline in social solidarity that they are likely to create, all these factors could lead to the disintegration of the community. Whether or not the social solidarity of the island is affected depends on the reactions of the islanders to the present situation.

Clare Island is a community composed of three distinct groups of people, those who have never left the island and have no desire to do so, those who have been forced to stay or to return to look after old parents, or bachelor brothers, and who resent being compelled to do so, and those who emigrated and returned from choice, after spending a period of at least a year overseas, in Great Britain or America. Because of the composition of the community it might be expected that any type of united reaction towards the present difficulties created by the decline in population would be unlikely, since the three groups of people would probably have divergent aims. Those who have never left the island from choice would want to maintain the culture unchanged, and would oppose any form of progress, those who are forced to remain by kinship obligations would be actively uncooperative in attempts to maintain the island culture, or at least indifferent to them, whereas the returned emigrants would attempt to change many aspects of island life in order to raise the standards of living to those they were accustomed to overseas.

The reaction which the islanders display towards the problems which the decline in population has created show that there is in fact, no such divergence of aims, but a surprising unity of outlook in the island community, accompanied by a desire on the part of all three groups, to prevent the culture from being absorbed by more technologically advanced cultures.

Linton postulates that, in a situation where contact is taking place between two societies, one at a low level of economic development and one at a higher level, the less advanced society will tend to resent the threat of absorption by the more advanced society, and will attempt to prevent it. Its attempts to do so, can, he maintains, be regarded as a nativistic movement. He defines such a movement as "Any conscious attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture," the purpose of such a movement being the maintenance of social solidarity.

The culture of Clare Island is threatened with eventual extinction because of the way in which its members are continually being lured away from the island by the promise of higher standards of living on the mainland, or overseas, in England or America.

Not only has the decline in population created practical social and economic problems for those remaining islanders, but it is likely to create a situation whereby the life on the island becomes so unattractive, monotonous, and in some cases almost impossible, for those who remain, that, if some action were not taken to counteract the effect of depopulation, widespread depression would be caused and the community would disintegrate. The islanders cannot, if the society is to continue to exist, admit that many of them are being kept on the island against their will. They try instead to rationalise their presence on the island by attempting to perpetuate

HARVEST TIME IN THE VILLAGE OF GURTEEN.



"Cocks" of hay on the left of the picture will later be made into one large rick by the house. The earth bank separating one farm from another is typical of the inadequate fences on these eastern farms.

current elements of the culture, and by adjusting and adapting themselves to changing conditions, without, at the same time, attempting to effect any radical change in their way of life. Their reaction can be regarded as a nativistic movement, the purpose of which is to achieve some measure of social solidarity to counteract the problems created by the decline in population.

The nativistic movement takes the form of a determination to maintain traditional social institutions such as the "stations" and house dances, and the custom of visiting. As more and more families die out the number of houses on the island steadily decreases, and those remaining islanders, especially the old and celibate, were it not for such opportunities for social interaction, would feel completely cut off from community life. Consequently the islanders make a great effort to maintain the traditional dances and the practice of visiting, to prevent each family from becoming isolated. The stations are of special importance since they increase the sense of village unity, and the feeling of belonging to a wider, more inclusive group than the elementary family.

The importance which the islanders attach to their village organisation, and to the unity of the village, and their desire to maintain the old way of life is demonstrated by their insistence on maintaining the old forms of social structure. They insist on the villages maintaining their separate identity even when they have only as few as two or three houses in them, and resent any suggestion that they should be amalgamated into one or two large villages. For the islanders to amalgamate their villages, and for each village to lose its identity, would be an admission that the island was dying, and they refuse to make this admission.

Their attitude to the past also indicates their refusal to

admit that the traditional culture of the island is inferior to that of the cultures of the mainland and overseas. They show their attachment to their own culture by the interest they take in their traditional history, by the respect that they have for the aged, the way in which they glorify certain aspects of the past, notably the personalities and social life of fifty years ago, and by the way in which they respect the wishes of their old parents to remain on the island, to the extent of giving up good careers overseas to return to the island and look after them.

They have responded to the problems created by the decrease in population and lack of marriage - the decline in the economic self-sufficiency of the family, the shortage of male labour on the farms, and the increase in the number of incomplete families, by intensifying the cooperation between neighbours and kin. This increased cooperation counteracts the decrease in the economic self-sufficiency of the family, and makes it possible for small, incomplete families to continue to farm their land, which, without this cooperation, would otherwise be a virtual impossibility for many of them.

Probably the most significant adjustment which the islanders have made to the changing conditions on the island is the way in which they have counteracted the increase in "incomplete" families, which lack either men, or women, by relaxing the traditional division of labour between the sexes. The fact that the islanders have shown themselves willing to ignore this clearly defined division of labour, when necessary, in order that the society should continue to function, shows the importance that they attach to the survival of their culture.

Those emigrants who have returned to the island could create a general dissatisfaction with the standards of living, if they attempted

to raise these standards by introducing innovations, but they make no attempt to alter the traditional culture. They do not assume important roles, or make unfavourable comparisons between island life and life overseas, and they give their full support to such traditional institutions as the "stations" and house dances. In doing so they increase the confidence of the rest of the islanders in the desirability of maintaining the island culture. They have shown, by their return, that they have rejected the more advanced way of life for that of the island, and they show, by their attitude, that they do not regret this rejection.

The nativistic movement takes two forms:-

- 1) Action taken to counteract the economic problems created by depopulation by increasing the cooperation between neighbours and kin, and by relaxing the traditional division of labour when necessary.
- 2) Action taken to counteract the social problems created by depopulation by maintaining the old forms of social structure, and by maintaining the traditional mechanisms for social interaction.

The nativistic movement has led to an increase in social interaction, which has, in turn, increased the cohesion of the island community, and in doing so I postulate that it has had the effect of preventing a slackening of community feeling, and has led to an increase in social solidarity.

Without the determined effort made by the island community as a whole to counteract the effect of rapid depopulation, by their refusal to admit, though recognising, the decline of the island culture, and by the way in which they have infused new life into it, by a "nativistic movement," the community would disintegrate and

the islanders would be forced to abandon the island.

This nativistic movement can, however, only be a temporary measure. It cannot in itself ensure the survival of the island culture. Unless the reasons for the decrease in population, emigration and lack of marriage, disappear, the decline of the island culture and its eventual extinction are inevitable.

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